

LONGMANS MISCELLANY 1943

A COLLECTION OF POETRY,
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AND PICTURES BY LIVING
AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

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FOREWORD

The two lines of thought which have given rise to Longmans Miscellany are the knowledge, only too uncomfortably drilled into us as importers, that there are not enough books in India, and the feeling that there is a host of artists—poets, prose-writers and painters—in the country at the moment who must be finding it difficult to put their work before the public. We hope that our attempt to meet one need will go a little way, and in the right direction, towards meeting the other.

Qui s'excuse, s'accuse ; but we take the risk of saying, at the outset of what, for us, is an entirely new adventure, that the Miscellany does not *look* as well as we had planned. The paper originally selected for both text and illustrations was in the end not available and we had to fall back on second choices. In addition, we have found it difficult to get in touch, at short notice, with potential contributors. The Miscellany itself will show how far we have overcome this difficulty, with the help of friends—too many to mention by name—who have made suggestions and given advice ; and it will, we hope, be the means of putting us in touch with a great many other people, from whom we shall welcome advice, criticism and contributions.

If we have been right in our estimate of the present demand for a publication of this kind, we shall bring out a second issue next year. Any poems, articles, short stories, drawings or paintings received up to 31st March, 1944, will be considered for the next number ; these should be addressed to :

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or they may be handed into Longmans' offices in Bombay or Madras. All contributions will be acknowledged but none will be returned unless adequate postage is sent. Outright payment is made, on publication, for all work accepted.

Calcutta. November, 1943.

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Design for DUST-JACKET by *Jamini Roy*

We have to thank Mrs. Emmerson for permission to reproduce "Dancers" by *Jamini Roy*



"O M S Bromley, R A M C"

oil painting on wood 13 x 10

STUART RAY

THE TECHNIQUE OF T. S. ELIOT AND THE "PORTRAIT OF A LADY"

T. S. Eliot's criticism is a commentary on the problems of poetic art and creation and reveals certain preferences which have shaped his own poetic technique.¹ He is no doubt preoccupied primarily with the metaphysics of his own experience, and the relation of this experience, which constitutes the personality of the artist, to his creation. The poet does not create in isolation, but has definite relation to the past that never dies, and the present that is ever with us. T. S. Eliot maintains that the poet should write "not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order".² This is a principle of aesthetics and not merely of historical perception and criticism.

The problems that interest Eliot are, therefore,

¹ This essay briefly describes T. S. Eliot's conception of the relation of the artist to his creation, and then analyses in detail his poem, "Portrait of a Lady", which was written a year earlier than *Prufrock*. The aim has been to show that a careful analysis of the poems of Eliot will reveal their richness, complexity and dramatic quality, in short his craftsmanship. For a similar analysis of the poems of Donne, see *Donne, the Craftsman*, by P. Legouis; T. S. Eliot has commended this study in his essay on Donne, "A Garland for John Donne", edited by Theodore Spencer (p 4).

² See note on next page.

artistic, sociological and metaphysical,² and these are no separate entities but facets of the one single problem, the integrity of the work of art. The problem of the poet is not to "express" but "escape" his personality—"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion, it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality." The perfection of art is reached when this impersonal element becomes universal, this struggle "alone constitutes life for a poet—to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal."³ This metamorphosis of experience is the aim of all great art. Though in such a view of art the emphasis is on the truth, integrity and intensity of experience, the problem of communication is bound to have a significant place.

The problem of technique thus becomes a problem of poetic creation, it is not something which is imposed from outside. T. S. Eliot has given a clear and precise account of his theory of poetic creation. He has compared the mind of the poet to a catalyst—"the shred of platinum"—which helps him combine diverse

² See his essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent" which, he said, had halted at the "frontier of Metaphysics" and was later continued in his examination of the relation of the poet to society in *After Strange Gods*, 1934.

³ "Tradition and Individual Talent". If this conception of the neutrality of the creative mind is true, we must presume that the minds of Dante and Shakespeare were unaffected after they had written *The Divine Comedy* and the great tragedies. Creation is a spiritual experience and must influence the mind of the poet profoundly as it does that of the reader who shares their experience, for what else is reading?

experiences, bits of reading, half-forgotten phrases, into a new and living whole.

"The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together."

The mind of the poet is a finely perfected medium in which feeling and experiences are mixed and blended and minted into poetic images; and when the mind has created new combinations, like the catalyst, it still remains, "inert, neutral, and unchanged."³ The difference between the "art" and "the event" that is transmuted is thus "absolute" and what counts is not so much the intensity of emotions but "the intensity of artistic process, the pressure so to speak under which the fusion takes place".⁴

The artistic process is a process of communication as well as creation and there is no duality between the two. It is to Eliot "the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end."⁵ The technical problem is "to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling",⁶ and speaking of Donne he said, "a style, a rhythm, to be significant, must also embody a signi-

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Quoted by F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (p. 81).

⁶ "The Metaphysical Poets".

ficant mind, must be produced by the necessity of a new form and a new content". The poet's feeling and emotions are not important in themselves but, as he said of Valéry, "not our feelings, but the pattern which we make of our feelings is the *centre of value*."⁷

This "pattern of feeling" when adequately expressed, at the right pitch of intensity of emotion and under the proper pressure of artistic process, is what makes a poem unique and significant. This is what T. S. Eliot called, in a memorable phrase, the "objective correlative", for he holds that the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding "an objective correlative; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."⁸ This is achieved by the fusion of "emotion" and "thought" but sometimes great poetry may be written without any direct poetic emotion; in that case the feelings will be inherent in the situation.⁹

From this very brief description of T. S. Eliot's view of the relation of the poet to his creation, it will be evident that imagery is not an embellishment for him, it is a part of meaning and though he uses visual images, symbolistic suggestions, metaphysical conceits, his early poetry has been more influenced by the

⁷ My italics.

⁸ See Eliot's essay, "Hamlet and His Problems".

⁹ T. S. Eliot cites Canto XV of *The Inferno* (Brunetto Latini) as an example (in *Tradition and Individual Talent*).

peculiar quality of French wit combined and added with Donnean conceit, and it is why his "free verse" is nearer to the blank verse of the late Elizabethans like Webster and Tourneur than to the prose rhythm of the contemporary free verse.

Eliot has clearly acknowledged his debt to these sources. "The *vers libre* of Jules Laforgue," Eliot significantly remarks, "is free verse in much the same way that the later verse of Shakespeare, Webster and Tourneur, is free verse; that is to say, it stretches, contracts and distorts the traditional French measure as later Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry stretches, contracts and distorts the blank verse measure."¹⁰ Language is tortured to yield meaning, as in the great tragedies of Shakespeare, the poet has to become allusive and indirect "in order to force, to dislocate, if necessary, language into his meaning".¹¹

This discipline of the free verse was revealed to Eliot in the poetry of Pound. Pound's search since his imagist phase has been not only to find the exact word, hard and metallic, unsoiled with cheap romantic feeling, but he has also insisted on the concrete image, "to use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation," and on the rhythm composed "in the sequence of musical phrase, not in the sequence of metronome".¹² Pound tried to resuscitate the "dead art of poetry", and his imagery with its refinement and

¹⁰ For a detailed study of Eliot's debt to Laforgue see M. René Taupin's *L' influence du Symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine de 1910 à 1920*, Paris, 1929.

¹¹ See Eliot's essay, "The Metaphysical Poets".

¹² See the essay, "A Retrospect", in *Pavannes and Divisions*, 1918.

attention to detail came to acquire the "glow of porcelain".

"His true Penelope,
Was Flaubert,
And his tool
The engraver's.
Firmness
Not the full smile,
His art, but an art
In profile."

Pound etched his images with the clarity and firmness of a great engraver.

The first volume of poems that T. S. Eliot published was called *Prufrock and other Observations*, and the emphasis on the word "observations" should not escape our attention as observation is closely allied to two faculties, wit which presupposes critical detachment, and irony which implies a tinge of satire—Wit, irony, satiric observation, coloured with the cultural *décor* of Laforgue are all present in this volume which was published in 1917. Though this volume took its name from "Prufrock," the "Portrait of a Lady" was composed a year earlier when Eliot was only twenty-one years old.

The poem characteristically is a dialogue in which the two characters are revealed by the speech of one and the commentary of the other who does not directly reply. It is the technique of Donne's "Extasie". The opening lines of the poem read like stage-directions in a play,

"Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon.
And four wax candles in the darkened room.
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead.
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb."

Eliot seems to have the scenic interior in mind for he exclaims: "You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do." The "darkened" room becomes Juliet's tomb, for the youth of the lady is entombed in the womb of time. The dominant note of Scene iii, Act V, of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is entombment of beauty and characteristically Romeo calls the grave, "Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death".

The lady seems to be preoccupied with the implications of her departed youth even when she is about to embark on her "amorous" adventure.¹³ The scene has been set to a premeditated plan, for she is "prepared for all things to be said or left unsaid". The key-note of the poem is her consciousness that youth has departed from her forever, and we notice that the trace of cynicism in her character is one which comes from chastening experience, and throughout there is an undertone of regret that her life should have been lived not differently but more intensely. She knows that her life is composed of "odds and ends", that harmony out of diversity of experience which constitutes living has not been achieved. This impression is dexterously conveyed by the mention of cracked cornets, of violins that need tuning, of false notes, the odds and ends which constitute the meaningless repetitive routine of

¹³Shakespeare remarks that "unsubstantial death is amorous".

life—the discussion of late events, walking through the fashionable quarters of Paris admiring the monuments, aimlessly correcting watches by the public clocks—and so life passes on in a sequence devoid of any significant experience.

The poet calls this state of being a “tobacco trance”. In all the early poems of T. S. Eliot there is a consciousness that modern life is devoid of any experience that leads not only to the crystallisation but also to the integration of personality; and in the evening of life, to some a little more sensitive than the vulgar herd, to “Prufrock” with “a bald spot in the middle of his hair”, (singing like a “fool”, “I grow old, I grow old”), to the nameless lady in a mood of cynical depression thinking she is “about to reach her journey’s end”, there comes in a sudden revealing moment the realisation that such a life has been lived to no definable aim or purpose.

The lady in the second part of the poem is no longer in a mood of reflective cynicism as she is obviously agitated and twists a stalk of lilac around her fingers as she talks. She is talking of life with a superior air of experience, presuming she knows better than her youthful friend “what life is”, for she is emphatic: “You do not know, you do not know.” But instead of an imaginative surprise, we have from her a commonplace observation about the passing away of youth. Youth holds life in its hands—a magnificent gesture of concentrated force—and lets its vitality flow out of him, royally, carelessly—“You let it flow, you let it flow”—instead of conserving it. Youth is thus drained of life-force and is reduced to age. This

remark is a profound observation neither on life nor on youth but it is in keeping with her character, for she equates life with youth and cannot conceive one without the other. She knows not how to transmute the radiance of youth into the serenity of age, for in this process lies the secret of growing old gracefully. The past years of youth can never be for us "perpetual benediction", unless they bring "the philosophic mind".

The poet thus in an indirect manner reveals that she comprehends not the nature of her failure in life, meaning her inability to impose "order" on her chaotic experience. The problem for the poet as well as for one who wants to live significantly is identical, to evolve harmony out of the chaos of experience that life is. T. S. Eliot has remarked that while the poet is "amalgamating disparate experiences, the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary".¹⁴ The experience of the lady, in spite of her pose of cynicism, her pretended and superficial preoccupation with cultural things—like the music of Chopin—remains irregular and fragmentary, and the harmony of her life is like that "of a broken violin on an August afternoon", and she somehow knows that nothing can now alter the current of her life; it has flowed out to the journey's dead-end. There is nothing else to do but let her mind feed on the memories of "buried life", of "Paris in the spring". We, however, know the peace that she feels within her is the peace of illusion—of "emotions recollected in tranquillity"—tranquillity

¹⁴ See Eliot's essay, "The Metaphysical Poets".

being co-existent with illusion only, and then the inevitable sense of disharmony returns and life is "out-of-tune" again.

The little tea-party is over and the youth has spent an afternoon in amused indifference,

"I smile, of course,

And go on drinking tea;"

and now he departs, leaving her to the contemplation of her lost youth for he cannot share her reveries :

"I take my hat : how can I make a cowardly

amends.

For what she said to me?"

And so ends another meeting.

I will pause here briefly to consider the nature of the relationship described in this poem. Like Donne's elegies, this poem relates a liaison between the lady and the nameless youth. Mr. Hugh Ross Williamson briefly disposes of this poem with a remark that here is a "woman who is middle-aged, endeavouring to attract a man younger than herself—an unforgettable portrait which, inspite of its cruelty, never degenerates into caricature."¹⁵ I see no cruelty in the portrait which is self-revealing and realistic. Her life perhaps has been a social round of parties, of irregular contact with things of art and culture, of one liaison leading to another adventure—the life of a lady!—and, like the liaison of Hamlet's mother, we can hardly call it love. Hamlet tells his mother :

"You cannot call it love : for at your age

The heyday in the blood is tame, it is humble,
And waits upon the judgement."

¹⁵ *The Poetry of T. S. Eliot* (p. 64).

And she realises she has nothing to give which the youth demands :

“What have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy
Of one about to reach her journey's end.”

As if friendship and sympathy are not the two finest things that one can give to another, but she is thinking of the passionate intensity of her life—symbolic of Paris in the spring—of the heyday of her youth, but her lusts do not wait upon her judgment; and though she is somehow conscious of the awkwardness of the present situation, she obviously succeeds in her amorous adventure.

Mr. Hugh Ross Williamson does not describe the situation accurately when he says that this is a portrait of a lady “endeavouring to attract a man younger than herself”, for she is not merely endeavouring, there is no doubt that she has succeeded in the adventure. No critic has so far noticed that the poet has divided the poem into three parts to correspond with three seasons—winter, spring, autumn; he actually mentions three months, “fog of a December afternoon”, April when “lilacs are in bloom”, and October “when night comes down”.

The lady and her young lover have been to a concert where they heard the music of Chopin, and she then brings him to her flat,—as she puts it, “I have saved this afternoon for you,”—and it is obvious she succeeds in her amorous advances in that seductively lighted room. We are supposed to imagine that the

liaison lasted from winter to spring and in the second part it has already lost its warmth, for she is gently taunting him that youth is cruel, has no remorse in forsaking friends in search of new adventures, and smiles at situations the seriousness of which it does not understand; and deep down within her, with a woman's intuition, she knows that she can hold him no longer!

“You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel,
You will go on, and when you have prevailed
You can say : at this point many a one has failed.”

The point where many have failed is the point where liaison is merged into a finer relationship—love or friendship.

But the youth feels he cannot sincerely reciprocate her feelings; there is nothing else to do, so he takes his hat and walks out of her apartment. He obviously resumes the aimless routine of his life :

“You will see me any morning in the park
Reading the comics and the sporting page.
Particularly I remark,
An English countess goes upon the stage.
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed.”

With this miscellaneous experience of disjointed fragments of life, no wonder the youth asks, “Are these ideas right or wrong?” His remark,

“I keep my countenance,
I remain self possessed,”

is, we know, a mere pose, a pose of self-deception, for this liaison has shattered his self-complacency.

In the third part we are at once made to feel that he obviously has been visiting her frequently, for he quietly says, "returning as before", meaning to her apartment; he had the foreboding that something decided yet unusual was going to happen, and this feeling of uneasiness is described through a metaphysical conceit worthy of Donne :

"returning as before

Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees."

She has perhaps already heard from common friends—"all our friends" as she tells us a little later—that he is planning to leave her and go abroad, and her straightforward question is asked in a tone of irritation,

"And so you are going abroad ; and when
do you return ?"

He is at once taken aback and knows that his foreboding was correct, but she continues in a vehemence of suppressed emotion :

"But that's a useless question,
You hardly know when you are coming back,
You will find so much to learn."

The tone of irritation is obvious and so is the emphasis on the word "learn" referring to the *Ars Amatoris*.

"Perhaps you can write to me.
I have been wondering frequently of late
(But our beginnings never know our ends !)
Why we have not developed into friends.

For everybody said so, all our friends,
 They all were sure our feelings would relate
 So closely! I myself can hardly understand."

These lines, put together without the interruption of the soliloquy of the youth, make a fine dramatic speech, revealing a *tense* moment. The speech ends in a quiet tone of pathos and tragic irony :

"We must leave it to fate.

You will write, at any rate.

Perhaps it is not too late.

I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And so ends her little adventure which began on that memorable December afternoon. She perhaps had thought it would end differently; he had youth and charm, she thought she had experience and wisdom and wit; and all their friends (for the liaison seems to have lasted nearly ten months, December to October, and was common knowledge amongst their friends) thought it would mature into something more permanent. But our beginnings can never shape our ends, and so she is left with the sense of doom upon her—her life made of inconsequent odds and ends, serving eternal tea to friends and so we leave her, a pathetic figure in the gathering autumnal shadows.

The youth realises that he somehow knew the end would be like this,

"*This* is as I had reckoned.

I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall
remark

Suddenly, his expression in a glass.

My self-possession gutters; we are really in
 the dark."

He has matured also and these are the accents of experience; he is no longer the youth who had remarked, affirming the careless spirit of youth,

"I smile, of course,

And go on drinking tea."

He had obviously left her and perhaps gone abroad, and now that he is trying to fulfil his promise of writing to her, it is strange he can hardly find any material for his letter, so ephemeral was their relationship!

"And I must borrow every changing shape

To find expression dance, dance

Like a dancing bear,

Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape."

In this conceit T. S. Eliot has expressed the difficulties of poetic expression while conveying the dilemma of the nameless youth. Donne who had wrestled with the problems of poetic communication also knew that words could never express our thoughts; as from their very rising they are coloured by the *aura* of the thinking self. Donne held that the word could not express "the nature of what it understands". In one of his letters Donne pondered, like Eliot, over the relation of the words to the thought they are intended to express. "Yea, words which are our subtlest and delicate outward creatures, being composed of thoughts and breath, are so muddy, so thick, that our thoughts themselves are so, because (except at the first rising) they are leavened with passions and affections."¹⁶

While thus musing, there creeps into the youth's reminiscent tone a strange pathos, but his memory significantly is not of love in April, or lilacs in full

¹⁶ Donne's letter to Sir Henry Goodyer; Gosse assigns this to 1609.

bloom and summer sunsets, but of an afternoon grey and smoky, the one in which they had their "first and fatal" interview. He asks, himself, what if she dies on such an afternoon; and this starts a train of self-revealing thoughts:

"Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,
 Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow
and rose;
 Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand
 With the smoke coming down above the
housetops;
 Doubtful, for a while
 Not knowing what to feel or if I understand
 On whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .
 Would she not have the advantage, after all?"

The advantage of having reached at last her journey's end—and thus having done with the ever-changing flux of experience. And one, who smiled complacently while taking tea, now claims the right to smile at life's irony for he is beginning to understand the meaning of death and so of life, realising that the end of all music is in its rhythmic close.

"This music is successful with a 'dying fall'
 Now that we talk of dying—
 And should I have the right to smile?"

The distinctive mark of a poem like the "Portrait of a Lady", is the fusion of passion and thought as in the poetry of Donne, and also the clear, almost visual, apprehension of the object and event. T. E. Hulme has described this process: "It isn't the scale or kind of emotion produced that decides, but this one fact: Is there any real zest in it? Did the poet have any

actually realised visual object before him in which he delighted? It doesn't matter if it were a lady's shoes or the starry heavens."¹⁷

In this poem T. S. Eliot has achieved the proper tension, and realised the exact curve of feeling and emotion—emotion adequate to the dramatic intensity inherent in the situation revealed in this poem. Discussing the relative merits of verse drama and prose drama, Eliot gave his reasons for preferring dramatic poetry. "People have tended to think of verse as a restriction upon drama. They think that the emotional range, and the realistic truth of drama is limited and circumscribed by verse. People were once content with verse in drama, they say, because they were content with a restricted and artificial range of emotion. Only prose can give the full gamut of modern feeling, can correspond to actuality. But is not every dramatic representation artificial? And are we not merely deceiving ourselves, when we aim at greater and greater realism? And are we not contenting ourselves with appearances, instead of insisting upon fundamentals? Has human feeling altered much from Aeschylus to ourselves? I maintain the contrary. I say that prose drama is merely a slight by-product of verse drama. The human soul, in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse. The tendency, at any rate, of prose drama is to emphasise the ephemeral and superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and universal we tend to express ourselves in verse."¹⁸ This shows his

¹⁷ *Speculations* (p. 137).

¹⁸ *Selected Essays* (p. 46).

early interest in drama and dramatic lyric which was to lead him to the writing of verse dramas.

In the dramatic quality of his lyric T. S. Eliot is following the same technique of silent monologue and dialogue as practised by Donne which has been so competently analysed by Pierre Legouis.²¹ The influence of Donne on the early poems of Eliot blended harmoniously with the influence of Baudelaire and Laforgue,²² for in Donne's imagery ideas are not conveyed through images but the image itself becomes the idea (as when a pair of lovers is compared to stiff twin compasses); the metaphysical conceit is thus nearest to the symbolist image. T. S. Eliot recognises this affinity and has written a critical note on the qualities that are common to both the metaphysicals and the symbolists like Donne, Poe and Mallarmé.²³

But T. S. Eliot even in his earlier poems is metaphysical in another sense, for he recognised that Donne and his followers had developed a new kind of poetic sensibility as they had discovered new values. Their passionate sincerity had made them curious explorers of the human soul, and the conceit enabled them to bridge the gulf between the mind and the senses. It is not a mere accident that the scepticism of Donne led

²¹ In Donne, *the Craftsman* his analysis of the dialogue-technique employed in "the Extasie" makes it easier for us to analyse poems such as "Purbeck" and "The Portrait of a Lady". Like the poems of Donne, the analysis of these poems, which are in the Donnean tradition, also reveal the dramatic quality of Eliot's poetry.

²² For the details of the influence of Laforgue, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Corbière, Gaudier and Baudelaire, see *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* by F. O. Matthiessen, 1935, where in his informative notes to each chapter the relevant passages are given.

²³ *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, Nov. 1925.

him to religious comprehension, and that his followers like George Herbert, Thomas Vaughan, Henry King, all entered the Church. T. S. Eliot, while comparing Gray and Collins to Andrew Marvel, has remarked: "Gray and Collins were masters, but they had lost that hold on human values, that firm grasp of human experience, which is a formidable achievement of the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets. This wisdom, cynical but untired (in Shakespeare a terrible clairvoyance), leads towards and is only completed by the religious comprehension."²² T. S. Eliot is also metaphysical because of his abiding interest in the problems of life and the rôle assigned to Man in the drama of existence.

The cynicism and the satirical wit of the youthful Eliot²³ of the early poems have been replaced by the religious comprehension of the post-Wasteland period, leading to "Little Gidding"; and this process in its artistic integrity and passionate sincerity is not altogether unlike the terrifying honesty of Donne's metaphysics of experience, from "Songs and Sonets" to the sombre majesty of his sermons.

²² See his essay on Andrew Marvel.

²³ The two significant early poems of Eliot, "Portrait of a Lady" and "The Love Song of Prufrock" were written when he was twenty-one and twenty-two respectively, but they already reveal, like Donne's "Songs and Sonets", a mature sensibility and a unique command over the rhythm; and there is a curious resemblance in this with Donne, for Ben Jonson, Drummond says, "affirmeth Donne to have written all his best pieces ere he was twenty-five years old". T. S. Eliot recognises the close connection between rhythm and feeling, and remarks, "It is not for me but for the neurologist to discover why this is so, and why and how feeling and rhythm are related." ("A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry".) There is no doubt that, like Donne, T. S. Eliot is also a reformer of the English tongue.

ALLAN BLOCK

(1) PORTRAIT OF MERRILL

(tour de force)

Brow of disdain in wide manoeuvre,
Calisthenic on world sclerosis,
Parades the necessary error
As kings choking on sapphires.

Eye, pheasant, feeder on silica,
Reveller with the sun's unknown foetus;
Flat palm the veined leaf held
To the light, whim of Aristophanes.

Largo head recumbent on the theme,
Comber of the thigh's white yarn,
Alone in the great stairless house
With sand on the loose mattress.

This is your familiar room, my friend,
Where the bunched rug lies patternless,
I would stand at the door dumbly,
Become interested in the hall light,
And wait, or doze on the hard bed.

ALLAN BLOCK

(2) BRUISE

Flat condiment that glazed our early years :
 the shellholes in the sandpile
 trenches in the sky
 the old helmet the cat used for a bed
 damp then, now dry
 still 'there' looking offended

(you know the one that had
 I love you Mike Argonne 19
 scratched delicately inside)

Poor catalogue that emulates the decade :
 shellholes in the talcum powder
 trenches in the toast
 the new helmet with the ventilated core
 will take a certain
 rudimental polish I am told

(you know the one that has
 metal for boy's cool utility
 contour for cat's adoration)

FOUR POEMS FROM THE CHINESE

- SPRING SORROW (CHIN CHANGSI)

Drive the orioles away
 So that they may not sing on the branches.
 Their songs would so disturb my sleep
 That my dream could not reach Liao-si frontier.

THE LUNGSI LAY (CHEN TAO)

Selflessly they swore that they would sweep out the
Huns.

Now the five thousand sable-clad lie in the Tartar dust.
They are become but bones along the bank of Wuting
River.

Yet they are living men in the dreams of their wives.

ANCHOR AT NANKING (TU MU)

The smoke covers the cool water; the moon
covers the sands.

I anchor near the tavern house beside the
Chinghuai River.

The girl singers know not the woe of a
fallen nation;

On the other bank, they still sing the song
of "The flower behind the Courtyard."

ON HEARING THE FLUTE (LI YI)

In front of Huelo Peak the sands glint like
snow.

Around the Desert City the moonlight shines
like hoar-frost.

A flute of reed is blown from somewhere
unknown.

All night, the soldiers are stirred by
visions of home.

Translated by Liu Yih Ling

DOUGLAS HARDING

BEETLES

He had drawn a picture of a sexton beetle in his exercise book during the algebra lesson, and the master had caught him in the act. Five boys, one holding each arm and leg, and one holding down his head, had pinioned him during the beating. Afterwards, for a quarter of an hour, he had sat with his head buried in his hands, and then the master had drawn from the lapel of his coat a pin, had crept up behind and pricked him, while the boys tittered.

And now, school over, Manuel walked away towards the water meadows. His sobs became less convulsive and less frequent as he began to look about him. A little ahead, through a gap in the hedge, lay the field where the cows had been grazing. He crawled underneath the barbed wire and sat down beside a heap of cow dung, and, taking a small stick and some match-boxes out of his pocket, began to look for the dung beetles.

A crust baked to toughness by several days of sunshine covered the mound, like the crust of a loaf of bread; inside, the manure was soft and moist, a green-brown compost tunnelled into a warren of chambers and corridors by the beetles. As he prodded the richly-stinking mass with his stick they appeared, each dung-eater at the end of his food tunnel. Unbelievably clean and polished they seemed, most of them with bright black wing-cases and carapaces, some dull and warty,

and a few like nodules of lustrous metal. They scurried away and were lost in the grass, or, feigning death, stayed motionless for a little while, then made a stealthy dash for cover.

Soon the inhabitants of the heap were all either lost or captured, and his attention turned to the grass around him. The earth was teeming. A green spider with delicate hairy legs hung lazily from a grass blade; two fierce brown ants zigzagged frantically among the stems beneath; a fly with an abdomen of blazing red tinfoil settled for a moment on his coat sleeve, then vanished in a flash. From under a fragment of the scattered dung a devil's coach-horse beetle appeared, holding aloft her black belly, and withdrew. The ragworts, rising sheer from the close-cropped grass, were stripped almost to nakedness by yellow-banded Cinnabar caterpillars. The pulsing air was noisy with the chirping of grasshoppers and the drone of the busy greenbottle flies, that are never languid even on the hottest day.

Between the stems of two ragworts stretched a web, almost invisible save for glistening beads of moisture where the threads met, of a great garden-spider. Manuel, with his eye on the spider hiding under the leaves, threw a fragment of grass into the web. Immediately the fat creature rushed forward, seized the obstacle, and by a series of cunning motions pulled it clear of the sticky threads and cast it clean away. Then an unwary greenbottle became entangled and, struggling violently, tore a gap in the web. More cautiously the spider approached; let float her threads till they bound the fly in a strait-jacket of silk, then

she pounced upon it, smothering it in her hurried embrace. As the jaws sank into the body Manu thought he could hear the flesh crackle like the rending of tissue paper. The convulsions of the fettered, pain-stricken fly, and the spider working upon its body with a fearful insistence, roused his memory with a jerk.

Yes! In the midst of the turmoil he had for one second forgotten the whistle of the cane, the suppressed eager mirth of the boys who held him, the pain. For one moment the master had laid a hand on the back of his head—a gentle friendly hand, almost a comforting hand, yielding no pain. Yet the other was mobile, cunning in its task of inflicting harm, terribly intent upon the injury of his flesh. As with raised hand and hammer the workman bruises the wood, so the master seemed like an artisan, taking pleasure in the exercise of his craft. There was a great mystery in the difference between those two hands. And the preparation and the delay, the deliberate choice of the boys who were to hold him, the face of the master as he took off his coat and dealt a few preliminary swishes in the air—they, too, were fascinating and terrible. That night, he promised himself, he would borrow his mother's hand-mirror and look at the weals. Ten of them, blue and purple shaded; later they would pale to a greenish hue, and in a week or so only the memory of them would remain. He thought of the master, whose body could feel pain and show disfigurement also. How often he had thought of that—the master must one day suffer bodily anguish, die and rot away! How often he had pictured himself towering over the master, handling gently the hands that he would presently

pierce with the nails, touching the feet before crossing them to drive the iron home, choosing carefully those who were to hold him down, delaying and making arrangements, talking with the victim, while he, Manuel, wielded the hammer, and afterwards, as the master hung there, watching his face and showing him the scars of the beating!

A small brown head poked out of the end of a dung tunnel and drew back. But the boy had seen it, and seizing the stick, he thrust at the fragment here and there till the beetle appeared, large, round, slow-moving, encased in brilliant gold. The carapace shone like a jewel above the corrugated wing sheaths, which had a dimmer lustre; the legs were brown and stumpy, and the antennae, whose ends were flattened into little discs, waved with a regular motion. It was an unhurrying creature and unresentful. When Manuel held it between his fingers its limbs betrayed no sign of agitation, but rowed the air like little oars, slowly, with a sublime indifference. And on its back and belly and head there crawled a number of tiny parasites.

At home, an hour later, he took his matchboxes up to the bedroom. Beetles, he knew, were difficult to kill. For killing butterflies and moths he had used pounded laurel leaves, to the vapour of which butterflies soon succumbed. Moths lived longer. Sometimes a fat-bellied hawk-moth would survive for an hour in the laurel bottle, and beetles scarcely seemed to be affected at all. On one occasion, he remembered, a carrion beetle had spent an afternoon in the bottle and had emerged unscathed. In desperation he had cut off its head with a razor blade, intending to stick

it on again afterwards, but the headless carcase had crawled away while he was looking for the glue.

Luckily, he reflected, cyanide of potassium is far more deadly than laurel leaves.

He emptied the matchboxes one by one into the new cyanide bottle. The last of them contained the gold beetle. It fell down on to the plaster surface with a thud and there it remained sprawling, with its legs waving in the air. The other beetles crawled over one another, ran round and round the base of the jar, or, attempting to climb the smooth sides, fell back repeatedly. For a long while, it seemed, the beetles lived, but gradually the movements of the smaller ones grew weaker, then they rolled over and after a few tremors were still. But the golden beetle lived fully twice as long as any of the others.

Then came the pinning and the setting. The small black beetles were as tough as horn and crackled as he drove the pins through their right wing sheaths. Having fixed them in single file along a setting-board, he arranged their legs and antennae with care, pulling them out with a needle. There they lay, a fine display of dung-eaters, stretching the length of the setting-board, with legs extended like marchers frozen, yet still living. Their sheen, their vigorous rotundity, had suffered no change. Death seemed to touch them not at all. And like a king among them strode the golden beetle, cleaned of his parasites, as splendid in death as in life, save for the black pin through his belly.

That night Manuel lay with his head propped up on the pillows, admiring the beetles, wondering how

it was that dung could turn itself into a nob of gold. As he wondered, the setting-board appeared green, dotted with mounds of cattle dung like pennies dropped here and there in the grass. And in the field walked a great beetle that wore a pair of silver horns. Over the gate it jumped in a twinkling, taking no more notice of it than if it had been a matchbox. Manuel crept up to the gate and peeped through into the next field. The beetle had gone. There was nothing but snow everywhere, and over the snow a blue-black sky with Chinese lanterns hanging down out of it, like emeralds and rubies. And there began a kind of music that he could not hear distinctly because the snow muffled it.

By this time the gate had grown so tall that he could not possibly jump over it. So he stood perfectly still and felt himself floating steadily upwards, while a crowd of children beneath clapped their hands and shouted hurray. Soon he could see the snow glittering on one side, and the children, no bigger than butterflies, dancing on the other. The air was motionless and full of gentle clangings that seemed to come from the Chinese lanterns. He waved goodbye to the children and sank, down, down, and down till his feet touched the snow.

In the distance there stood a church with a tall steeple, and red light glowing through the windows. Manuel could see the priest kneeling before an image of Jesus, made of wood and enamel. The people knelt down and the organ began to play, softly at first, then louder and louder, but with a hushed loudness, as the notes tumbled over one another in their race across the

snow. Then the tenor bell in the steeple gave a great boom, the music ceased, the church vanished, and Manuel discovered that the snow beneath him was drifting away.

Again he stood perfectly still and wished. Soon he was sailing lightly above the clouds, while the sound of the children clapping below grew fainter, and died away. Up here the sun shone beautifully. Stretching far beneath were innumerable cloudlets that looked like white curling feathers mingled with rose petals. The air was fresher and more limpid than the purest breeze that ever blew over the lower earth. The sky was a richer blue, the sun a more brilliant yellow, than he had ever known. He plunged till he reached the cloud tufts, then soared again into the blue. And all around him there was music, unspeakably clear and sweet. Then he started falling slowly, slowly, till at last he tumbled on to the snow again.

He sat there, numb with terror at what he saw. A golden beetle, about the size of a mouse, was creeping stealthily over the snow to where he was. Its face was the face of the master, contorted into an expression of diabolical merriment, and as black as the night. Horridly, with mechanical deliberation, it advanced, the motion of each leg like the stab of a little bayonet. Manuel could not move, could not wink an eyelid. When he tried to call out, no sound came from his throat. Great beads of blood gathered on his forehead, and, dripping on the snow, stained it crimson. Then the thing touched him, mounted his foot, and began to climb his leg, each claw rasping the skin and leaving a long blue wound. Higher and higher it climbed,

becoming larger at each step, and glowing fearfully. For a moment it stood still on his thigh. Then he screamed and woke.

He found himself sitting up in the bed, naked. A ray of faint starlight shone across his body, and there on his thigh sat the golden beetle, still impaled on the pin, shimmering, with its horns in a tremble. Then it strode forward, scraping his flesh with the pin, till it toppled over and fell into the bed.

The spell broken, Manuel leaped on to the floor, shaking violently. Meanwhile, there came from the direction of the table a scratching sound, and he went across to look. In the dim light he saw the setting-board and the row of beetles; all of them come to life again, scraping at the paper with their legs. One of them rode up and down on its pin like a rider in the saddle, and around the pin there oozed from the beetle's body a globule of moisture. From the setting-board, across the table and along the sheet, ran a little trail of blood, left by the golden beetle.

He picked it up by its pin from the bed, pinned it again to the setting-board, and sat down to watch. Until sunrise he sat at the table, too absorbed to feel the cold.

For two days the beetles lived, then one by one grew weaker and came to rest. But the golden beetle lived on, riding up and down on its pin, scraping two grooves in the board with its legs. Every day, after school was over, Manuel sat watching it, and on the evening of the third day it died.

NORMAN SWAN

UNSEEN

He is a great friend of mine but I have never seen him.

We talked of England, he and I. We talked so long that we got the whip of the wind in our faces and felt the challenge of wet, flinty roads. We wandered through red ploughland and along lanes with yellow nut-catkins in the hedges and arrived home to muffins and gingerbread and a brew from the big brown teapot.

We discussed books. He was more highbrow than I and held that *War and Peace* was the finest novel and that *The Frogs* of Aristophanes the greatest comedy in any language. He looked with lofty indulgence on my love for Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* but he was prepared to admit that the farming novels of Adrian Bell are sometimes well worth reading. Sometimes he frightened me. He was almost a bigot. But for the most part we got on well enough and worked our way through literature from the first grunts of Pithecanthropus to the precious lyrics of W. B. Yeats.

We found that plants interested us both so we talked of John Gerard, the Elizabethan herbalist. We wished that we could have some of his borage with its brilliant blue, for of it he says, 'I Borage, give alwaies courage;' and at that time we were rather in need of courage. We thought what attractive names our flowers have, hearts-ease, jack-by-the-hedge, eye-bright, self-heal and marjoram. He told me that in

Scotland the common ribwort is called a carl-doddie. Children pluck one piece and, striking in turn, try to cut off the head of their opponent's carl-doddie. The winner is king of the carl-doddies.

He was a fisher and I was not. But whether you fish or not, a river has a universal appeal and I was content to listen for hours at a time to such things as the merits of the stone fly in April and the muddy fly in May. He knew and loved the lore of the stream, whether dapping with a grasshopper or fishing with the May-fly. He explained patiently to me the mysteries of the melter and the spawner and told me that dead worms catch no fish.

I have always been a keen musician while he professed a limited interest confined to simple Grieg on the piano and a few tunes on the bagpipes. So now it was his turn to listen while we idled from the pipes of Pan by way of Chaucer's

'Pipes, Nakers, Trompes and Clariounes

That in the Battaille blowen bloody Sounes,'

to the unforgettable experience of the Glyndebourne festival.

We loved it, every moment of it. I hope some day to meet him for, as I have told you, I have never seen him. He lay for a fortnight in the bed opposite mine. I could not move and as his leg was high in the air in a Thomas splint I never saw his face. And yet I know the soul of the man.



"Innocence my foot ! They're absolutely riddled with sex"



*"I'm simply a harmless lunatic who wants an
electric fitting that looks like an electric fitting"*

TENDENCIES IN MODERN BENGALI POETRY

If someone were to sit down with any anthology of Bengali verse and read through a hundred pages of it, he would be left with a feeling that something essential was lacking in it. It is of course very sweet and moving—what could be sweeter than the *Vaishnava* songs of love and desire, and what could be more moving than the superb lyrics of Tagore? Nor is profundity altogether wanting; a certain amount of grandeur too was brought to it by Madhusudan Datta. And yet—well, what is wrong with it is that it tends to be a little too sweet and too moving. One looks in vain for a tough core underneath. To call it spineless would be overstating the point; but its muscles are still undeveloped. This should not surprise anybody who knows that, although Bengali poetry goes back to the fifteenth century, Bengali prose is barely a hundred years old. Eliot has said somewhere that some of the essential qualities of good verse are the essential qualities of good prose too. Of these essential qualities, some find a favourable atmosphere for growth in verse and then pass on to prose, while others germinate in the soil of prose and are later transplanted to verse. Bengali poetry has not had the benefit of having a first-class prose literature by its side. There has not been one great prose-writer during the last hundred

years except Tagore himself. And Tagore's prose is great, as it often is, not because of any greatness in its intrinsically prose quality, but because he brought his magnificent gifts as a poet to his prose. Pramatha Chowdhury and after him Annadashankar Ray have written more essential prose and have written with great charm. But in spite of them one feels that Bengali prose has yet to find itself, has yet to learn to be precise without being pedantic, subtle without being elusive, simple without being inane, and, what is most important of all, it has still to acquire the strength to carry without strain the weight of the new ideas, in all their complexity, that are rushing in from the four corners of the world. This lack of discipline in the exacting school of a virile and sinuous prose is one of the chief handicaps from which Bengali verse suffers. It is no answer to say that Shākespeare wrote the greatest poetry in the English language at a time when English prose was in its cradle, for Shakespeare's genius does not abide by any rules of criticism.

Modern Bengali poetry could be dismissed in a line by saying that it is a cross between Tagore and the Anglo-American poetry of the twenties and early thirties. That would of course be a hasty generalisation and an unfair judgment, for the recent poetry of Bengal is not quite as dead or characterless as all that; though naturally, and I should think quite rightly too, Tagore has been the focal point of all our poets who came after him. In a far more literal sense they could say of Tagore what Eliot said about Pound: "I am never sure that I can call my verse my own; just when I am most pleased with myself, I find that I have

caught up some echo from a verse of Pound's." It is also undeniable that many of our young poets have learnt much from Hopkins and Eliot and Lawrence, from Auden, Spender and Day Lewis. Yet such a generalisation would not be true, for it is only a half-truth : the other half of the truth being that modern Bengali poetry is quite as much a revolt against Tagore as it is a tribute to his genius; and secondly, that in spite of its having been deeply influenced by recent English poetry, there is a conscious attempt in it to find its bearings in the tradition of its own soil. I shall have something to say about the first point a little later.

As regards the second point, it is curious to note that although one source of inspiration for this attempt to traditionalise was naturally the heightened sense of nationalism coming from the two recent mass movements in the country, the other source was Eliot, the critic, rather than the poet, Eliot. Eliot's emphasis on the importance of tradition in literature has made some of our very modernised poets conscious that they have to find a place in the continuous tradition of Bengali poetry, that they have to write with their whole past literature in their bones. But this Eliotesque coordination of "tradition and the individual talent" has not been so far very easy or quite successful for our younger poets. For one thing, all through their school and college years English literature far more than Bengali literature has conditioned them and fashioned their taste and outlook. But a more important reason is that all the past poetry of Bengal does not form one living whole in the way in which the

poetry of England does. It is neither so much alive nor quite so integrated. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, that is to say before the impact of English poetry on ours took place, there had not been a poet with a personality and sense of history deep enough to bring together its loose currents—its *Mangal Kavya* based upon the folk legends of Bengal, which had been refined and ornamented by Bharat Chandra until it was almost stifled by the weight of its own jewellery, and its fast-decaying *Vaishnava* literature which had become traditional in the bad sense of the term. In the middle of the last century came Madhusudan Datta, with colossal abilities and a large canvas. But instead of looking back at the past of Bengal, his eyes were turned far away towards the tradition of English poetry and its heritage. So that when his powerful catalytic agency came to work, the chemical ingredients were the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid* and the *Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*, with *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* of course thrown in, and even a sprinkling of Kalidasa, but hardly anything of his Bengali predecessors. The result was admirable, and more than admirable, considering the total unfitness for such a task of the Bengali metre and diction that Madhusudan inherited; but one could hardly fail to see the synthetic nature of the product. There followed many imitators, but they were all swept away by Rabindranath Tagore, our greatest poet, though again a purely lyrical poet—inevitably perhaps, for the genius of the Bengali language remains lyrical in spite of Madhusudan's efforts to give it an epic mould. That is to say Rabindranath could not take up where Madhusudan

had left off; he had to go back to the *Vaishnava* singers, and wed their passion and poignancy to the maturer mind of the English romantics. His poetry of course was no mere synthetic stuff; it was at once traditional and original, assimilative and creative. But the new way of feeling and expression standardised by Tagore is not yet a tradition. It is still very largely a matter of homage to, and domination by, a single individual; though Tagore's uninterrupted literary outflow for over half a century has entered through so many diverse channels into the very marrow of Bengal's cultural and artistic body, that I would not know how to contradict any one who maintained that this single individual is a whole tradition by himself.

One of the chief problems of our contemporary poets, here as elsewhere, is how to get out of the hopelessly narrow conclave into which they have got themselves. Caudwell has given an admirable analysis in orthodox Marxist terms of the economic and social forces which have brought about this sorry state of affairs, culminating in the transformation of art into "craft-fetishism". It will not quite fit in with the situation in an almost pre-industrial and semi-medieval country like Bengal; but the thought of Bengal is indissolubly linked up with the thought of England, and therefore of Europe, as never before, and art and literature to-day are as global as peace and war. And so Caudwell's objective analysis of the literary situation in England could be applied to our literature with slight modifications. Leaving this to others better versed in Marxism and the economic forces of contemporary Bengal, I want to look at the question from the other

side, the subjective side. What are our poets trying to achieve at the moment and, in their attempts to achieve it, are making the Chinese wall between them and their readers thicker and higher?

Poetry, in a sense, can be considered to be the emotional transmutation of a thought or, rather, of an experience in its totality. This transmutation is carried to varying degrees by different poets, especially by poets of different ages. The nineteenth century in Europe exalted the passions at the expense of the intellect, so we find the transmutation carried to its furthest emotional limits. Thus we have Wordsworth defining poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity". The total psychosis, of which emotion can only be an element or a character, does not interest him as a poet. The seventeenth century, on the other hand, left the transmutation at a much earlier stage. Consequently we get a much bigger slice of its thought and experience in its poetry. As Eliot points out: "Racine or Donne looked into a good deal more than the heart. One must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system and the digestive tracts." The twentieth century is a reaction against the nineteenth century and its values, and as such has moved further back in the process of de-emotionalisation than the seventeenth century metaphysicals. Modern poetry is not only intellectual, it is cogitative. And the degree of educated intelligence demanded by Valéry, Pound or Eliot from their readers is little short of what Einstein and Dirac want from their students. Quite apart from this over-sophistication of our intellectualist poetry, there is a further obvious reason why such

poetry should find difficulties of communication which a purely emotional poetry need not. There is a far greater community of emotion between man and man than there is of thought. Finer shades of difference will be there of course, but, broadly speaking, my loves and hopes and fears will be much like yours, whereas there is no limit to the possible eccentricity of my thoughts. For all these reasons our modern poets, who are not content with expressing an emotion but want to convey an entire experience in all its depth, extensity and complexity, have become difficult, and some of them incomprehensible. Bengali readers, accustomed to the pellucidity of their poetry from Chandidas to Rabindranath, are bewildered by Sudhindra Datta, Amiya Chakravarti, Bishnu Dey and their disciples.

The charge of unintelligibility against Sudhindra Datta seems to me almost wholly misplaced. His fondness for archaisms and new coinages is probably its sole basis. So far as that is a mannerism, it is to be condemned, but I don't think it is mainly a question of mannerism with him. It arises out of a genuine need, rhythmic need sometimes, but more often coming from the pressure of new and elusive ways of thought and feeling which refuse to be covered by the existing vocabulary. We should not lose sight of the fact that in spite of the vast contributions of Tagore, the Bengali language has still far too few words, and what is more, its rate of growth is deplorably lagging behind the rate of growth of our ideas. Once we get across this barbed wire of unfamiliar words which are of course freely scattered over Datta's poems, there is little that is difficult in him. Personally I have nothing but

admiration for the amount of intelligibility which he can impart to his poems in spite of the complexity of ideas and subtlety of attitudes that they are made to carry. His is the maturest mind amongst the new generation of poets, and amazingly well-ordained for a poet. The balance between passion and logic that he has achieved is unequalled in Bengali poetry, and is his greatest contribution to it. Much more to the point would be the criticism that Sudhindra Datta's diction is too chaste and too rigid. He is ransacking the archives of the language—and sometimes going beyond them to Sanskrit—so far as its vocabulary is concerned, but he is not making full use of its idiomatic wealth. As a result there is a kind of classic detachment about his poetry. I have no wish to underrate the classics, but a contemporary classic sounds rather contradictory.

There had been several poets in the Bengali language who had utilised its rich idioms for the lighter kinds of verse, for parody, for children's doggerel, or at best for satire. More serious use of spoken idioms is comparatively recent. I believe Tagore again was the forerunner with his story-poems in *The Fugitive*. A man's most intimate and significant experiences are bound up with his speech idioms, and in the evolution of poetry towards greater intimacy with the daily life of man lies its only hope of survival. There is a general realisation of this fact among the younger poets of Bengal, and most of all in Amiya Chakravarti, who has brought in the idioms and rhythm of spoken language with consummate skill. He is not only trying to use all the superficial resources of the Bengali language, but is making daring experiments to go

underneath the surface and bring to light its hidden potentialities. He has not hesitated to adopt novel constructions of word and clause reminiscent of Hopkins. I am not aware that he has had recourse to telescoped words like Joyce, but telescoped clauses and sentences are not rare in his poems. All this is of course to attain a degree of concentration and depth in expression not always obtainable with normal linguistic usage. Besides, the angularity of his expression is occasionally due to the fact that he is trying to look at things from a very new angle. And finally, Amiya Chakravarti is an impressionist among poets. Sometimes he wants to give us the emotional shock of a perceptual field of view in all its bewildering variety and richness. Much as the impressionist painters were trying to produce the effect of brilliant pulsating hues of nature by juxtaposing daubs of diverse pure pigments, Chakravarti sometimes uses a juxtaposition of clauses, half clauses and single words—which can merge effectively only if the mind of the reader is quick enough to take them as a whole. Modern poetry is becoming more and more a co-operative business, a joint product of the writer's craft and the reader's sensitive intelligence. I have to admit of course that sometimes Amiya Chakravarti's craftsmanship, consummate as it is, fails because he pitches his ambition too high—perhaps beyond not only his own powers, but beyond the potentialities of linguistic expression as such. It still remains to be seen how far the comprésence of impressions, that is possible in a picture, can be realised in a poem.

Bishnu Dey is the other important poet about

whose unintelligibility there is wide complaint. One source of difficulty he shares with Amiya Chakravarti, namely his determination to produce the maximum of effect with the minimum of words. But his technique is different. His occamite razor operates not so much in the construction of sentences as in the construction of the poem as a whole. As a matter of fact his poems are often not whole poems so much as collections of brilliant lines or couplets, and some of his longer poems ("Cressida", for instance) are a number of exquisite little shorter pieces juxtaposed with dotted lines in between. I don't deny that they form wholes, sometimes extraordinarily effective wholes, but a certain amount of padding is needed to make the continuity evident. This padding is left to the ingenuity of the reader. If he can do it—and he has to do it without effort, almost subconsciously, so as not to distract his attention from the lines which he is reading—the poems (when Dey is at his best) have a magically haunting effect. Otherwise they look rather like a new form of cross-word puzzle. There is, however, another and a more important source of difficulty in Bishnu Dey—his predilection for what may be called the musical theory of poetry.

A word usually has two kinds of meaning: (1) objective, in which it refers to a particular object or its quality, or a universal, or a relation, and (2) subjective, in so far as it carries an emotional ambience around it through its many associations, visual and auditory. In science and philosophy the former meaning alone is taken account of; in poetry the latter meaning is pre-eminent. There are poets

like Mallarmé and Eliot who not only consider that the objective meaning is of secondary importance in poetry—according to Eliot it only helps to keep the reader quiet while the emotional content of the poem does its work upon him, much as the imaginary burglar is always provided with a bit of nice meat for the house-dog—but they go much further and, becoming impatient of the objective meaning, “perceived possibilities of intensity through its elimination”. Bishnu Dey evidently belongs to this musical school; as one might expect, not a few of his poems have an unforgettable lilt about them. But the elimination of objective meaning from a poem is bound to baffle the normal reader, whose every habit and predisposition lead him to expect it as a matter of course. It may be that if he is trained up from childhood in this new school of poetry, his discomfiture would gradually disappear. Though personally I do not think that this burglar’s meat can be so cavalierly dispensed with. The emotional content of a poem is so closely bound up with its objective meaning, that elimination of the latter will loosen and scatter the emotions too. The poem will of course still arouse some emotions, for the lilt of its word music and the image-associations of the words will remain even when the objective content is lost. But it is not unlikely that different emotions will be called forth in different readers, and the same reader may find himself oscillating from emotion to emotion.

Twenty years ago Bengali poets were completely dominated by Rabindranath Tagore. They were thinking his thoughts, writing his language, using his

rhythms. About this time came Nazrul Islam, raising his powerful if rather primitive (and completely un-Westernised) voice in protest. He took everyone by storm with his poem *The Rebel*, which was a sort of rhapsody on the nascent spirit of revolution. Nazrul Islam did not come so much as he was thrown up by the upheaval of the Bengali mind resulting from the huge political awakening of the non-co-operation movement and its aftermath, the second phase of terrorism in Bengal. His success was immediate and unparalleled, in fact he was *the* poet of the nationalist revolution. In spite of his parochial mind and naive sensibilities, Nazrul Islam, the most instinctive of the Bengali poets, stirred up a new and virile individualism. A little later Buddhadeva Bose, still in his teens then, came out with his own literary rebellion, impelled partly by Nazrul Islam but much more by the cynicism of Aldous Huxley and the iconoclasm of D. H. Lawrence. As an adolescent he resented the overshadowing influence of Tagore, but his present maturer poetry shows no trace of that resentment. He sees, as every one must see, that a Bengali poet can only develop his originality on the basis of an active though critical acceptance of Tagore. Tagore is not merely an influence, he is the intellectual and artistic soil of Bengal. Of all the moderns, Buddhadeva Bose's poetry comes nearest to Milton's formula "simple, sensuous and passionate". He was amongst the first to have become poetically aware of the lack of sensuous element in the love poems of Tagore—magnificently beautiful though they are, but with a beauty that is more angelic than human. Bose is an extremely fine

writer of prose too, a phenomenon rare among the Bengali poets (Tagore of course being the great exception). During the last fifteen years his mind and medium have developed steadily, unaffected by the "movements" about him; and now he writes with a delightful ease and an unperturbed grace that must be the envy of his problem-ridden compeers.

Starting from Nazrul Islam up to the present year a distinct curve can be noticed in the movement of Bengali poetry, a curve that rises (or falls, I don't know) from extraversion to introversion, and comes back again to extraversion. Nazrul Islam and some of his immediate successors—among whom Premendra Mitra was the most important—sang of the revolutionary martyrs and of oppressed humanity, and tried to reach out from their poet's corner to "the dirt and the dross" of the common people. After this there was a phase of withdrawal and secluded introspection and cynicism, and naturally of a movement from emotion towards intellect. Perhaps this phase is connected with the ennui of defeatism that had set in the national mind after the failure of the second mass movement of 1930-31. This phase was at its height in the middle thirties, and its most significant poets were Sudhindra Datta, Bishnu Dey and, towards its close, Amiya Chakravarti. It was the phase of meticulous craftsmanship and bold experiments in technique, of free verse and prose rhythm—in which last again Tagore was the great pioneer. Virtuosity became the key-note of poetic creation, and our poets became more interested in ways of saying things than in the things they had to say. But just as new sensibilities compel a writer

to forge new forms of expression, so it seemed that the technical novelties that were being earnestly experimented with would develop new sensibilities in conformity with them; for the pressure of form on content is as great as of content on form. And something like this did happen. Bishnu Dey, whose clever but piecemeal creativity had astonished us in his *Shifting Sand*, now came out with finished masterpieces in *Foreword*, and Amiya Chakravarti wrote his *Token of Spring*, a far richer and deeper book than his previous publications. Sudhindra Datta was never an experimentalist in technique. The balance between his emotion and intellect has been paralleled by a parity of development in his form and content.

The third phase of modern Bengali poetry, beginning with the forties, is the phase of Communism and near-Communism. Marxists would of course characterise the development of these three phases as a dialectical movement; and even a non-Marxist will have to admit that the present return to extraversion is extraversion at a higher and more self-conscious level than the proletarian rhapsodies of its first phase. Bengali poetry has learnt a good deal during the intervening period of introspective analysis and preoccupation with technique. It is true, though, that leftism has become the literary fashion of the day and, the less competent a writer is, the more anxious he is to be meticulously *à la mode*. Amongst the genuine poets of the left Samar Sen writes with charm and intelligence and a refreshing freedom from ideological regimentation. It is a pity that Subhash Mukherji, very young but amazingly gifted, has chosen to desert

the Muses (how old-fashioned the word sounds !) at the call of active politics. One hopes that the dialectic spiral will negate his life of pure action, and bring him back to poetry—at a higher level. An event of no little importance to the contemporary poetry of Bengal is the recent emergence of Bishnu Dey as a Communist poet. The application of a finished technique to a cause, that can inspire as nothing else can inspire in the world of to-day, can well be expected to produce great poetry.

A doubt remains. Can a contemporary poet with all the sophistication and scepticism that is not only in his brain but has gone deep into his blood, adopt a detailed, all-embracing—far too all-embracing—system of thought like Marxism, and make great poetry out of it, as Dante did out of Thomist philosophy? The ability to submit unquestioningly in the whole field of our thought that existed in Dante's time has left us, I think, for ever. It may be my *petit-bourgeois* perversity, but it appears to me that complete conformism to-day, when not hypocritical or unintelligent, can only be a *tour de force*. Such a thing may work well on the platform and on the field of battle, but great literature is not produced by forced makeshifts. A writer may identify himself with the cause of Communism attracted by its noble ideals, or by its many acceptable ideas. But when he is regimented under its entire ideology, when he is made to stuff his mind with all its Hegelian jargons which read to-day like an undecipherable language of pre-history, his creative writing is bound to suffer. A creative writer, who goes about all the time feeling mentally straight-



Miniature Painting by Musaffer for the late
Mr. Francis Berry, to which reference is made on p.62

The farmers have deserted the fields, the mice scurry
into their stacks;
The golden sunset fades, and the diffuse melancholy of
twilight

The night stretches wide before me, blue in the endless
dark;

And loneliness absorbs me into its visible vastness.

*Translated from Bengali by John Irwin in collaboration
with the Author*

GEORGE SIGERSON

THE TOLLING OF THE BELL

“Nunc lento sonitu dicunt, morieris”—

DONNE'S *Devotions*

Lost in the artifice of decaying cells,
And the neat surgery of twisted nerves,
This dying generation knew no song.

The bells ring out and the pulse is changed,
I remember my burial in the tolling bell,
But there is no illustration of gathering shadows—
A clod of sadness and overshadowing of Death.
Covering life as Earth the seed.

The soul falling out of the hands of God
Into the pit of subconscious self,
Knows that life is falling, falling,
Into the minute disintegration of self.

There is no renewal here, the bell is tolling,
The bell tolleth for him that thinks it doth,
And softly ever softly, he is united to darkness,
As shadow to the light as seed to the shell.

ORME SCOTT

OLD DAN

Martha lay on the truckle bed in the corner, covered over with rags and old newspapers. Dan was sitting on a three-legged stool, spitting into the fire. He liked to hear the spittle splutter in the flames, but after a while he ran dry and, taking a wad of tobacco out of his pocket, he began to chew, the yellow juice running down his chin.

Every now and then Martha groaned somewhere deep down in her throat. Each time she groaned Dan looked up with dull, uninterested eyes. This wasn't the first human Dan had seen die, may be it wasn't the hundredth either.

"They're all the same," Dan used to say down at the store; "they're all the same when they're dead. It's only them parsons that try and make sensible folk think different. I've seen 'em," he would go on, "I've seen 'em croak, lots of 'em, and there ain't nothing left when they've done it, just bones and things." And Dan would give one of his dry, crackling laughs.

Lots of folks round about used to wonder how Dan could stand his job watching bodies die, but it didn't worry Dan any. "S' like any other job," he'd say, "only it ain't hard work; you just sits and waits. Not that it ain't got its responsibilities," he'd hasten to add. "Why I've had to knock a fellow out that was all nice and ready to die, to stop him running out of the door."

You see folks round our way haven't time for

luxuries like sitting at home waiting for bodies to die, what with sowing and harvest and the swine to look after down in the marsh land. So Dan used to do the watching for them. Fifteen cents an hour and a jar of applejack a day he used to get, and it was wonderful the way some folks used to hang on; folks what ought to have died nice and quick like . . . why some of them used to live for days.

Not that any of them used to live after Dan had been called in. Very proud he was of that. "When ol' Dan comes in at the door the soul flies out of the window," he used to say. And to see some of the dying folks' faces when Dan arrived was really laughable. All we kids used to crowd in after him. Sometimes the body on the bed would just give one look at him and then turn over and face the wall and never move again. But sometimes, and these were the best, they would shout out, "Don't you come in here, Dan, I ain't a'dying, truly I ain't, Dan . . . just got a bit of a cold on the chest, please go away, Dan." But Dan never went away, he knew folks always died when he was called in. Some went fast and some went slow but they all went sooner or later.

Martha was one of the slow ones. Three days Dan had been watching now. Only skin and bone she was, but she still grunted and groaned and breathed. Obstinate Martha was, always had been. Tough she was to. Why, when she was fifty she could cart more hay in a day than many of the young Cracker women round our way; and to see her driving a mule team down in the Long Bottom was a treat.

Yes! Martha was tough all right. But that, Dan

thought, weren't no excuse for not dying when the right time came. And the right time, he reckoned, was when Dan was called in. It was all very well to earn fifteen cents an hour but a body couldn't be expected to work all day and every day. Dull it was too with Martha just lying there. He liked the ones that lepped up in bed yelling that they saw the devil or that their souls were going to hell. Even an epileptic was better watching than this. Besides, he liked to have something to tell the boys down at the store. Sense of humour Dan had, see. You should have seen him showing the guys, how an epileptic woman threw herself out of bed. The faces he made! Did a heart good to see him.

No, Dan thought, I'll have nothing to tell the boys this evening; and he went over and looked down at Martha.

"How you feelin'," he asked, "wuss?"

"No, Dan," answered Martha, "Ah'm sure feelin' better."

"Feelin' better," said Dan, "You sure you ain't 'magining it?"

"No, Dan. Ah ain't 'magining it, Ah'm feeling right comfortable now."

"That's bad. Why don't you get done with it?"

"Ah ain't goin' ter die," Martha went on, "Ah ain't goin' ter die, Dan, not for you nor for nobody else."

Dan shrugged his shoulders and went back to the fire. He looked at the applejack jar. It had been empty for over an hour now and he was getting terrible dry.

"Ah've had enough o' this," he said over his shoulder.

"What do you mean, Dan?" asked Martha from the bed.

"Ah'm fed up waiting for you, wumman," he said, walking back across the room.

Martha sat up, the effort contorting her face. "What are you goin' ter do Dan?" she asked, "you ain't goin' ter do nuthin'?" Her voice was high-pitched with fear.

"Ah'm only goin' ter help natur's course," he said; "Ah knows mah duty when Ah sees it."

"Don't you do nuthin'," said Martha, pressing herself against the wall and pushing at him feebly with her hands.

"It won't hurt much, wumman," sez Dan and takes her by the throat. Skinny it was but tough and it must have been near five' minutes before Martha stopped struggling and slumped back in the bed. Dan stood back and flexed his hands. My, but she was strong, he thought, she might have taken a week if I hadn't helped her.

He walked across the room and sat down on the three-legged stool, taking a piece of paper and a stub of pencil out of his breeches pocket.

He looked at the old clock first and then began to write: "Three days of ten hours a day plus five hours on the fourth day at fifteen cents an hour makes five bucks, twenty-five," he wrote laboriously.

Well, he thought, I've earned it, no one can deny that.

REFLECTIONS OF ISFAHAN

Three hundred and forty-four years ago, as near as makes no difference, two Englishmen swaggered across the great King's Square at Isfahan, and into the Royal Bazar. The sun was setting at the end of a short winter's day, and the musicians, squatting in the Band Tower over the entrance, blew on their fingers to get some warmth into them, before bursting into a hymn of praise to the departing day.

The Englishmen, both of them short stocky figures, were warmly clad in the mode dictated by the fashion in vogue when they set sail from Elizabethan England the previous year. Nevertheless, they were glad to get out of the bitter wind blowing across from the Masjid-i-Shah, whose gaily tiled domes and minarets had been completed only a few years before. They were brothers, these two, Sir Anthony and Sir Robert Shirley, and they had been sent by the Earl of Essex as envoys from Queen Elizabeth to the court of Shah Abbas the Great. The family, which is a branch of my own, had been composed of solid Sussex squires, until the father of these two took a post in the Low Countries under the Earl of Leicester. From then onwards, adventure seems to have entered into their blood, and they have been called "one of the most picturesque families in the annals of the human race". There was a third, equally adventurous, brother, but he did not accompany them on the Persian expedition,

which had led them to Isfahan by a long and perilous route, including a sojourn in Bagdad, whence they barely escaped with their lives.

When the Shirleys first arrived in Persia, Abbas the Great had reigned for thirteen years, during which period he had been almost continually on the move, spreading peace in his territory by means of force. He was "of low stature, (a Gyant in policy), his aspect quick, his eyes small and flaming, and without any hayre over them: he had a low forehead, a high hawked nose; a sharp chin; and after the mode of Persia, beardless; his mustachoes were exceeding long, and thick, and turned downwards."

Persia grew progressively more peaceful, and Abbas decided to maintain his court at Isfahan, and he himself delighted to plan and supervise the beautifying of the town, building mosques, pleasure gardens and palaces. But he did not confine himself to outward magnificence. With a penetrating grasp of economics, he made a point of developing foreign trade, and he administered his kingdom so that all save the incurably indolent were assured of at least a living wage. Under his administration and encouragement the arts began a great expansion. Under him the development of architecture, particularly in Isfahan, rivalled the lavish days that Persia had not known for nearly a thousand years. The wealth that accumulated under Abbas served the people as a cushion, when a succession of weak and incompetent monarchs precluded all hope of further artistic development, save in already existing channels. But in the paths open to them: Isfahan's craftsmen continued to work, every father handing

down to his sons his particular branch of skill. So it has gone on.

Thus, when I, too, entered the Royal Bazar a few years ago, I knew that I was passing the same shops, filled with identically the same handmade wares as my forebears, Anthony and Robert, had seen three and a half centuries ago.

An ordinary covered bazar is often nothing but narrow streets, and still narrower shops, roofed over, like the 'Street that is Called Straight' in Damascus. But to an architect the arches and vaults afford scope for distinctive treatment. Abbas was quick to realise this, and at Isfahan he achieved dignified beauty.

The main entrance portico is sixty feet high. The outside is decorated with a striking mosaic faience. Within, the fan vaulting suggests a cathedral, so that the structure is a worthy complement to the mosques and palaces surrounding the King's Square.

Shah Abbas owned over a hundred palaces in Isfahan alone, but almost the only ones remaining are the Chehel Situn, or Hall of Forty Pillars, and the Ali Qapu, the pavilion lying at right angles to the bazar, from which the King and his court used to watch mass polo and other equestrian sports. The original polo goal-posts still stand at one end of the square. Of grey stone, highly polished by the centuries, they are about seven feet apart, and they offer sterner resistance than the modern wicker-work sort.

The Persians were expert stone-cutters, and they executed the details with scrupulous elegance. They took an immense pride in their work, and many

beautiful examples of the stone-cutter's art still play their part in the every-day life of the city.

Occasionally, stone work was considered sufficiently decorative in itself, as in the wonderful Masjid-i-Jumma, the Mosque of the People, which has a great feeling of rhythm, despite its austerity. But nearly always the buildings, secular or religious, have been faced, both outside and in, with tiling, mainly in turquoise and yellow. Abbas was determined that his capital city should be really beautiful, with nothing slipshod about it, so he sent to China for instructors in porcelain-making, although the local craftsmen already plying their trade turned out creditable tiles, platters and bowls. The signature of the artist can often be found tucked away in a gay spray of blossom, or unobtrusively traced at the edge of an elaborate forest scene, where hunters pursue fleeting deer, and where small animal faces peer between tufts of grass.

Originally one end of the bazar was bounded by the Mosque of Sheikh Lutfullah, where, in the central hall, mosaic panels are framed with spiral tiling. No joints can be discovered in these tiles, and it is a mystery how they were baked in one piece. Lustre pottery had already been developed by the time that the star of Abbas was in the ascendant, but it was usually employed upon small vessels such as ewers. The ground was of ivory or clear blue, with a design in copper lustre. The potters of Isfahan have always been the most skilled in all Persia, and it is they who, within the last three hundred years, have developed a rosy cream colour through yellow into pink and so to a beautiful and characteristic red.

REFLECTIONS OF ISFAHAN

There is a potter's workshop only a few yards from the entrance to the Royal Bazar. You step out of the dim streets over a raised threshold, and enter a large room where the daylight streams through the roof. All around are examples of the potter's art. I could—and did—linger there for hours. The master prepares his vessels, his tiles and plates, and once a week arranges them in the oven, which is then sealed so that the clay is baked to the required hardness, in heat maintained at the precise temperature. One day the potter gave me, just out of the oven, a tile which, he said, was spoiled. The only flaw I could see was a small smudge upon the beard of a horseman who rode a curvetting steed. Upon the reverse a conventional posy stood out against a background of beautiful rich cream.

When I left the potter I walked down the main bazar avenue, and my attention was attracted, as was assuredly that of Sir Anthony, the flamboyant, before me, by the red-gold of a furnace shining through an oval oven-mouth. Bakers, their bare bodies glistening with sweat, were kneading bread, deftly rolling it into paper-thin discs and sprinkling it with caraway seeds. Tossing each disc, as it was prepared, from one apprentice to another, the leathery *chupatti* was laid upon a convex iron plate and clapped on to the inner side of the oven. After a few minutes it was extracted, browned to a turn, peeled off the plate, and added to an ever-growing pile. Occasionally passers-by would stop to take one, paying a small coin in exchange. The covered streets are lined with narrow shops; here a barber's, such as that from which Morier's

delightful rascal, Hajji Baba, set forth upon his adventures; there a sweetmeat vendor, where an attendant sits idly flicking the flies off his wares. The bazars are always crowded. Merchants hurry about their business, small boys pester to be allowed to carry parcels, women shop for the household, and country folk wander wide-eyed, gaping at the wonders of the city; so it is difficult to appreciate the architecture, save where cross roads meet and broaden out into a circular space surmounted by a lofty dome. Above you, half-hidden beauties gaze indolently through pear-wood grilles. Sometimes the windows have small glass diamond-panes, either plain or coloured, but curiously enough, Isfahan, so excelling in most of the arts, did not develop that of the glass-blower. Sir John Chardin, writing in the seventeenth century, remarks that "there are glass-houses all over Persia, but most of the glass is full of flaws and bladders and is greyish, upon the account, doubtless, that the fire lasts but three or four days and their Deremne, as they call it, which is a sort of broom, which they use to make it, doth not beat heat so well as ours. The glass of Shiraz is the finest in the country; that of Isfahan, on the contrary, is the sorriest, because it is only glass melted again." But, as if to make up for this lapse, the windows are fashioned with a criss-cross of wooden lattice-work in an endless variety of intricate and decorative designs.

The best of these decorations are by no means confined to places where they show. When I was last in Persia the cult of modernization was in full swing, and an immensely wide thoroughfare was being cut slap through a thickly built-over area of Isfahan. Com-

pensation was doubtless made to property owners, but no interference was brooked. Houses were cut ruthlessly in half, even rooms were shaved down if they happened to come within the path of the new road, and beautiful lattice windows were suddenly free to gaze upon the world at large instead of across a narrow foot-path.

But to return to the bazar; money changers squat, as their fathers and grandfathers did before them, at the cross-roads, probably unaware that, within a few yards of where they are, Abbas the Great used to mint his coins. No trace of the installations remains, save the name. The money-lenders clink a shining heap of coins, ready to hire them out, pouring them from one hand to another, making a loud metallic sound, to attract anyone unwary enough to place himself in their clutches.

In the quiet *cul-de-sac* where the Mint used to be, I climbed a narrow stairway to visit Musaffer, the chief exponent of Persian miniature painting to-day. There are two outstanding masters at present, Musaffer and another, whose name has, alas, slipped my memory. Musaffer had the honour of painting a country scene for Queen Mary, and for Lady Louis Mountbatten a picture of polo played at Isfahan by Abbas and his court. This miniature shows the upper verandah of the Ali Qapu thronged with spectators, and beyond it the splendid blue and yellow domes and minarets of the Masjid-i-Shah. Over a hundred horsemen are drawn up in lines, or gallop after several large balls. Beneath a ceremonial umbrella, surrounded by a bevy

of attendants, rides the Shah himself, resplendent in gold brocade.

Many books have been filled about the art of Persian miniature painting. It is an education to watch the artists at work, each colour poured into a little white porcelain bowl, and applied with brushes so fine that they seem to consist of scarcely more than three or four hairs. Musaffer himself is an unimposing figure, dressed in a shapeless suit of European cut. He sits cross-legged at his work, in a little attic, while his apprentices squat around the room, filling in backgrounds, or copying the master's designs. I possess a cigarette box painted by Musaffer, showing Persian horsemen. He painted a large miniature at the request of the late Mr. Francis Berry, who was at the time President of the Omar Khayyam Club in London. It shows Mr. Berry himself in Persian dress, accompanied by "a loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou". The most beautiful and characteristic part of this miniature is the border, in which animals, flowers and foliage are interwoven with consummate skill.

Miniature painting is, of course, distinct from mural frescoes, although the presentation is much the same. Mural painting was practised by the Sassanians, and became an accepted decoration by the sixteenth century. In the Chehel Situn some weather-beaten alcove paintings are thought to represent the Shirley brothers, to one of whom, Sir Robert, Shah Abbas gave in marriage "Teresia, the daughter of Ismy Hawn, Prince of the City of Hircassia Major". She, too, is depicted in the mural frescoes.

I watched some little boys making a picture of the

Chehel Situn—on a silk rug, exquisitely soft to touch, but how exacting to fashion! There is a small carpet factory just off the Royal Bazar, where children work, their tiny fingers deftly fashioning flowers and birds in intricate designs. The dingy barn where they work is so dark that it was several minutes before my eyes grew accustomed to the half-light. Immediately in front of the entrance a large frame hung from the roof, strung with thick cotton. Seated before it, upon a rough bench, were four or five little boys, aged perhaps six or seven, their bare feet dangling on the cold stone floor. At one end hung a paper chart of the carpet they were making, divided into squares like a *petit point* guide. Another hung near the top of the frame, where some more children sat suspended like sailors painting the side of a ship. At each chart sat an infant, smaller than most of the others, lisping directions in a dreary monotone. The workers repeated the instructions in a low drone, as, with a rhythmical sing-song movement, they swayed back and forth in time to the pattern they wove. Now and again one of them pressed down his work with a large curry comb. Another, using long-handled scissors, pared the surplus wool above the knots. In a corner, putting the finishing touches to an almost completed rug, sat an expert who is said to be able to give his rugs the appearance of being several hundred years old.

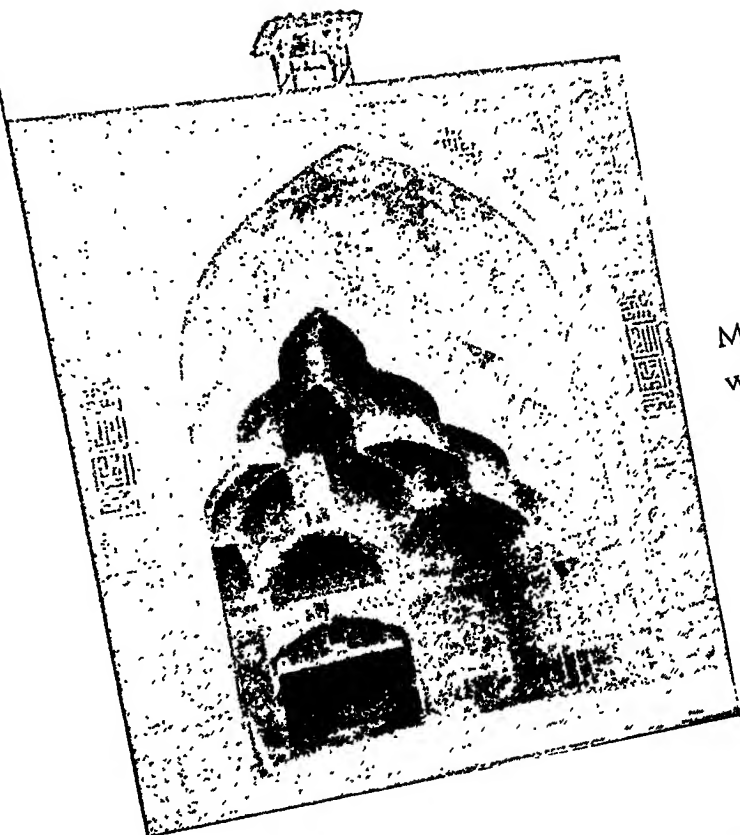
Village women spin the carpet wool, for it is stronger when spun by hand. They spin as they stride along with the swinging ease of the country-dweller, coil the wool into rough hanks, and send it to the city.

Preparation of the colours for dyeing the wool is

often kept a family secret, handed down verbally from father to son. Madder, pomegranate rind, grape juice, walnut husks, straw, saffron and indigo are among the raw materials used. I was once allowed to watch some of the dyeing in progress. The skeins are flung into a cauldron filled with the required colour, where they boil fast for a couple of hours, before simmering at a constant heat for a day and a night. The skeins then drip dry in the sun for about two days without being squeezed or wrung. Then they are rinsed in clear water and allowed to dry once more, before being separated ready for weaving.

Isfahan, Yezd and Kashan are traditional centres of weaving, not of carpets only. Isfahan, especially, used to excel in cotton and silk textiles, both figured and plain, and there was a large export trade to other parts of Persia, to the Caucasus and to near-by foreign markets. Women squat before rough home-made looms, and with the sure touch of life-long practice, move the shuttle back and forth across the loom, their fingers working quickly and deftly as they tie innumerable knots, their heads done up in gaily coloured handkerchiefs.

The cloth shops stood altogether in the great bazar, as they still do, although there are no longer stalls for twenty-five thousand workers. In the days of Shah Abbas even the Governor of the city walked in awe of the Chief of the Textile Guild, for he was one of the most powerful men in the country. The court looms alone were so extensive that they stretched for a quarter of a mile, from the Ali Qapu and the Royal Mosque, beyond the Chehel Situn. Abbas used to give away



Masjid-i-Jumma, Isfahan,
which dates from the
7th Century, A.D.



Cigarette Box painted by
Musaffer for the author

whole chests of gold and silver brocade, as well as bestowing the customary ceremonial garments upon his visitors.

Isfahan, even during the depression of the eighteenth century, still plied the textile trade, mostly in printed cottons with the designs often outlined in gold. I watched some craftsmen drawing freehand designs in indelible ink, with unfaltering speed, upon some cheap cloth that had been woven in Russia. Small boys elaborated and filled in these outlines, casually slopping a bedraggled brush into a saucer of colour, working rapidly, and again with that rhythmical jerk of the body. Table-cloths and bed-spreads were being hand-stamped with small square blocks.

The Street of the Embroiderers ran alongside the caravanserais, where merchants arrived with their wares to sell or barter them, and then sallied forth in search of some of Isfahan's far-famed embroidery to take back with them.

Sir John Chardin, writing during the reign of Abbas, says that "they make carpets, cushions, door hangings, and other felt furniture like garden knots and mosaic work representing what they please, and all of it so neatly sewed, that you would think the figures are painted, though 'tis all of it but patched work; and seam of them is not seen if you look at it never so near, they are drawn so curiously fine."

To-day, small gaily coloured pieces of felt or flannel are cut in tiny patterns and fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle to make a design; sometimes inset, sometimes appliquéd, held together with various decorations in stitchwork.

Next to an embroiderer's shop I spent a long time watching a chandler making candles. In the front shop the finished candles were displayed, and in an inner chamber, dusty, dim and smoky, he was making them. A large wooden hoop hung horizontally from the ceiling, and from it depended sixty or eighty little pegs, to each of which was tied a rough wick. Slowly the frame spun round and round, pivoted over a large earthenware bowl filled with smoking hot goat's fat. The chandler was an old, old man, dressed in flowing robes and a felt skull cap. His lined face shone in the glow of a furnace which caught the lights on his silver beard. Bending over the bowl he ladled his tallow continuously over the revolving wicks. At each application a little more adhered to the embryo candles, while the surplus liquid dripped back into the pan.

Near the chandler lived a fruit merchant, selling apples, melons, oranges, limes, pomegranates and small fruit like shrivelled cherries, each one carefully polished before being placed on the shining piles. Nearby, like a poor relation, a patient donkey stood rubbing shoulders with the bustling passers-by. He not only carried his master's wares, but his back made a convenient stall, equipped with scales and a primitive till, and piled with little heaps of fruit.

A few yards along a large open doorway, tiled in blue and deep ochre, showed a small courtyard, and round it the classrooms of a Mullah's school. Each class was divided from the others by a carved wooden lattice, and the little oasis had a quiet dignity accentuated by the noisy hum from outside. Small boys swayed to and fro as they conned their lessons, to

the rippling accompaniment of a little stream that bubbled from beneath the threshold where we stood, and ran between the gnarled old flagstones, disappearing beneath the farther wall.

Almost opposite to the school, uneven shallow steps led down to the vaulted entrance of a *hammam*, the public bath-house, where I, a woman, might not go. There was a continual coming and going, but I could do no more than look at the vigorous frescoes that adorn the roof and walls of the entrance alcove. Warriors, wearing chain mail and long moustaches, are portrayed in various belligerent attitudes; some mounted, some on foot. Here a heavily armed warrior is pursuing some wild animals, and a little further along another figure looks as though he was scaring away evil spirits, possibly some that had been induced by the opium smoking that used to be an almost universal habit in Persia, and which is still a financially substantial state-controlled industry, with Isfahan as its centre.

The sap obtained from the poppy heads is kneaded into cakes in the sun, so the factory is not in the covered bazar. But the drug is not the only yield of the poppy plant. When the crop is cut down the husks are piled into baskets and taken to the bazar, where oil is extracted. The place where this is done is unconsciously dramatic. It is a large, high barn on the main bazar thoroughfare, almost pitch dark, until your eyes become accustomed to the gloom, which is occasionally pierced, and then again intensified, by a fierce glare, as a furnace door across the way is opened for a moment, then clanged shut again.

In the centre of the barn a grunting, ill-tempered camel pads round and round, propelling a mill-stone that crushes the poppy seeds so that all the oil flows from them. The camel's eyes are blind-folded to prevent him from becoming giddy and falling down. One man continually shovels seeds beneath the heavy wheel, while others collect the pressed seeds in flat open baskets. These are stacked in a deep pit, one upon the other, until they reach the ceiling. Then one of the men climbs nimbly up some rude scaffolding fixed to the wall, and lowers from the rafters one end of a great rough tree trunk, until it rests on the pile of baskets. By the nice adjustment of levers, pulleys and wedges, the last ounce of oil is crushed from the seeds. Rippling muscles flex and tauten as the workers hammer a wedge here, alter one there, or haul on a pulley. Even when all the oil has been extracted, the seed husks are dug into the soil, to act as a fertilizer.

I could go on for hours, wandering in thought among the people of Isfahan and their handwork, but, like the Sirleys, I must leave them, although not, alas, carrying with me magnificent presents, such as Shah Abbas bestowed on Sir Anthony. He sent him "twelve camels, three tents very large, with all kinds of officials houses belonging to them, and household stuff; sixteen mules, every mule carrying four carpets, four of silk and gold, six of clean silk, the rest very fair crewel carpets; also he sent them fourteen horses (Sir A. Shirley says forty) whereof two of them were for his own saddle, two for his brother, and the ten for ten of us; he sent fourteen saddles, whereof two of them were of gold plate, set very thick with turkoises [*sic*]

and rubies, two of gold plate, plain; the other ten of velvet embroidered with silver very richly; and so much silver (Sir Anthony says of the value of 16,000 ducats) as six men could carry, entreating Sir Anthony to accept of that small trifle for a month's expenses."

B. W. CAVE-BROWNE-CAVE

THREE POEMS

I

I cry for I know not what and yet the tears
Will come. I stand upon achievement; men
Honour me; and yet their years are not my years
And what they think and I, and what we are, is gone,
Is vanished, with the winging of my thought. Five
aeons on!

Wind, wind, you beat upon the grain store
Still; birds sing and still the white campion
Is veined again with green; the shore
Tides turn and ducks light wing the water, combing
The shadows, where the poised clouds ride. But
others live;

Not I. And other hands cut back and prune the bough,
Where in this orchard spring, my blossom pears were
forming;

Others must skep my bees and garner honey from the
moorland hive;

And other hands guide straight the furrow, where I
was used to plough.

II

As a man, venturing over the saltings,
On a misty day, feeling the damp
Clog at his collar and the marsh ride dull
And heavy on his boots; and all the sights
Of day, familiar in the sun, transformed
And hidden in the mystery of the still,
Salt mist; suddenly stumbles on a stone.
He pauses, alone, half chilled with terror,
At this violation of the immense,
Unrealised stillness that enfolds him;
And then, right at his feet, rousing the dark,
The Redshank, the warden of the marshes,
Rings out his warning through the mists,
Shrill as the sudden entry of the strings
Above the hidden music of the sea.
The cries of gulls and curlew,
Shout in the silence; a sudden clamour
And beat of angry rhythm, as a host
Of frightened wings, tatters the darkness;
There's a sudden thronging of all the wastes
Of grey, with shadowy forms; a half seen
Flash of black and white and orange . . .
And then the mists roll in again,
And the sound merges and is lost
In the ceaseless rhythm of the far-off sea.

III

I too have been transfixed with glory, myself, my flesh,
Pure light. There was no sound, no song, no music, no,
Nor the quickening wind to fill the trees, to fresh
The stook gold corn; no sun, no cloud, no sheaved sea
shining, no,
Nor crest and curvet of the white wind waves, to flood
this will,
To image thought, to miracle this being
With the elemental fire. But as the sky, unseen and
silently,
Fills at the morning with an inward light, so was I
filled, so shod;
And as the blossom, with all a sudden, springtime
bounty,
Bursts on the day, pours out to fill the sky, until
It rills and sparkles, gems like a clear and crystal
water,
Possessing the hills and valleys, infusing
All with wonder; so were my limbs light filled,
instinct with fire;
So was I light to breathe, light sandalled and light clad.

DESPAIR

Anupam lay flat on his back, the day's paper stretched out before his face. Surama looked at him, not meeting his eyes. She paused a moment, and then :

"You aren't going out to office today?" she asked, a little nervously.

"Heigh-ho!" yawned Anupam. "Might not a chap have a little rest once in a while? And it was a heavy meal, too! Here, bring me another *pan*, will you?"

And while chewing his second *pan*, he remarked, looking at the picture page of his paper: "How indecently dressed these memsahibs are! Why not throw away that bit of cloth and have done with it? Just look!"

Anupam looked up for his wife, but she was not there. He shouted for her, and her voice came from the next room: "Which pair of shoes do you want?"

"Oh, she's at it again, brushing the shoes," muttered Anupam. He felt irritated, and when Surama approached, a pair of bright, chocolate-coloured shoes dangling from her hand, he didn't even look at her. Surama set down the shoes at the foot of the bed and said, "Time to go, isn't it?"

Anupam turned the sheets of the newspaper. Perhaps he had not heard. "It's about noon," called Surama in a louder voice. But her husband neither spoke nor moved. What was it that he heard?

engrossing in the paper? On the back of a chair were spread out his trousers, his shirt, necktie and coat, all in proper order. Gently fingering the clothes, Surama spoke again, this time in a coaxing voice: "Do get up now. You are horribly late as it is."

"Mind your own business," said Anupam, sharply. "I am not a wage-slave that I must rush every day on the stroke of ten. So leave me alone now, see?"

"But it wanted half-an-hour to ten when you made that terrible fuss yesterday," retorted Surama, with just a touch of temper. Yesterday her husband had got ready for office much earlier in the day and he was upset like a child because his new tie was missing. He shouted, he swore, he tossed things about; . . . he was nasty, not to Surama alone, but to the servant, to his sister, to his mother herself. Even his father had said to Surama, in a low, rather timid voice, "What a vile temper the boy has! But you might just as well get things ready for him beforehand . . ."

And Surama had felt so utterly ashamed that for quite a while she could neither speak nor even lift her eyes. She does all, all in her power, to make her husband comfortable in every way; but what can one do if one has to deal with a man who shoves his new ties into a drawer full of old letters, and then steams off his temper on the entire household!

And so she had got every little thing ready by nine o'clock this morning. But Anupam seemed to be in no hurry at all. "So you are staying at home?" asked Surama after a little while.

"No, I've got to go out." Anupam dropped the

And that was all she could say. She didn't seem to think of herself, nor of her husband; all her care seemed to be for her father-in-law. He was due to retire from Government service in a couple of years, and had no chance of 'getting an extension, for he looked older than his age. All his life's savings had gone to the building of this small house at Tollygunge. What was more, he was heavily in debt, and close and distant relations were always pecking him to death. As if he hadn't sons of his own at college, and daughters still to be married! Anupam, the eldest, had taken his course through college, and was sitting on his B.A. degree like a mother bird on her egg. It was four years now, but the egg wouldn't burst, nothing would come out of it. And he had married last year—or rather, his parents had performed their last duty to their son by getting him a wife. Happy, indeed, was Surama in her new home, happy in the tender affection of her parents-in-law. They cared a lot about her, she was a lucky girl. She, on her part, felt unutterably sorry for the old man, the head of a large, unwieldy household where the rule seemed to be that everybody else should spend freely what *he* alone earned. *He* would not replace an old shirt as long as he could help it; but new saris for the daughter-in-law came every now and then . . . lest the son should feel slighted or wronged.

Well, Anupam was the only hope. But what chances had he, an ordinary University graduate, what hope, seeing there were thousands like him in this city alone? How much was *he* worth, when even the best were not particularly wanted? Surama worried, for

that was all she could do. Her husband, however, seemed to take it quite easy. He was quite normally happy, eating, sleeping a lot, going out in the evenings, slinking out to a cinema whenever there was the necessary coin in his pocket. This complacency got on Surama's nerves. Hard times, terribly hard, but you've got to face it. One must set about it desperately and one day something will happen. It won't be much, but even a bare living is something. Besides, it is no life for a man, just drifting about, doing nothing. It isn't seemly either, come to think of it.

But a change had come over him, and Surama was ardently hoping that it would last. Out he would go every morning, and would not be back home till the shadows had lengthened in the lane. Surama was touched when she saw his tired, sunburnt face. But *this* was a man's life . . . and she felt a strange elation in her heart. She, alas, had slept away four hours of the long day, lying on a cool mat in a darkened room, but what else could she do? . . . She is just a common woman, fit only for housework, and of that she does as much as she can find. Anupam, returning home, hasn't to wait a moment for his tea; going for his bath, he invariably finds all his things neatly laid out, down to his pair of sandals just outside the bathroom door. More than this she *cannot* do. Brought up in the shady seclusion of an old-fashioned household, Surama has but little idea of the vast man's world raging outside. She can wash the underlinen her husband brings home; she can iron and save on the laundryman's bill; she can clean the floors ten times a day, if that will keep her husband in a good humour; there isn't, in fact, anything she can do

not do from cooking dainties to polishing shoes. But that is all. Her own people are far from rich; she has seen her mother working miracles with a meagre income, just through prudence and incessant toil. Surama knows her job, too; she will not fail.

One night she asked her husband, "What do you do all day?"

Solemnly, Anupam said only one word in reply: "Work." And it is the noblest word in the modern vocabulary.

"Any hope?"

"Well, let us see." Anupam's brevity implied a certain depth of mystery, and Surama did not have the courage to ask any more questions. And when he did the same thing for a whole week, going out at ten, and coming back, pale and haggard, in the evening, there was then no longer any room for doubt. At last he was really bent on finding work.

And then one day he told his wife: "Now don't talk about it to anybody, but I have dropped into a job."

"You have—really!" Surama's heart gave a big thump.

Anupam named a certain Life Insurance office. Surama gathered from what he said that the Company had been trying to get hold of his services for some time past, only he couldn't agree on the terms. Now at last those details had been settled, but not before a lot of haggling had been gone through. It wasn't anything princely, of course, just one hundred rupees to start with. But they had promised a lift after he had sweated for them for six months. And there's a good

commission, of course, besides the pay. They wouldn't mind putting down another fifty chips for car allowance, but not having a car . . .

Surama gasped. "Oh really?" she cried out, interrupting her husband.

Anupam smiled serenely. "Not too bad, eh? I've thought over the matter long enough, and today, you know, I've been to them to say yes."

"To say yes!" Surama's voice trembled with excitement. "I don't know what you mean, I really don't. It's splendid, don't you think, seeing that jobs are so scarce and men who want them so many. Why, there are lots of M.A.'s and all that, who would be lucky to get a job worth no more than fifty rupees! A hundred is more than many earn these days. And they will pay you a commission, too! Oh, it's great!"

But Anupam did not seem to share his wife's enthusiasm. "What does education matter?" he said, somewhat coldly. "What *they* appreciate is business ability, not learning."

"And what's the work you'll have to do?" asked Surama.

"Oh, not much of a bother that way," answered Anupam in a careless tone. "There'll be canvassers working under me—they'll get business for the Company, and I'll just have to look after the boys. I'm thinking I might as well buy a little car after six months,—I'll have to knock about the town a bit, you know."

Indeed, it seemed to be too soft a job. No work to speak of, and good pay! It was almost incredible! Surama found herself wondering that such a nice job

could come to her husband when there were thousands, many of them better qualified than he, who would have been only too glad to get it. Are all the others fools? But it was no use wondering now : it's like this when one's luck turns.

She found it a little hard to keep all her happiness to herself. "Why not tell the others?" she pleaded. "It's quite settled, isn't it?"

"But it isn't necessary to tell the world about it," said Anupam gravely.

"Oh, I'm not going to beat a drum and proclaim it in the streets," Surama smiled. "Have you told Father?"

"Not yet. You know he fancied me for a Government job, and I don't think he'll be too pleased. It's a small thing, when all's said."

"Don't say *that*," Surama protested. "Government jobs aren't going abegging, and this is nice, very nice—and I'm—oh, I'm so glad you've got it. You can take it from me that Father will be very happy."

Father was, indeed. And the first thing he had to do in this connection was to borrow fifty rupees for the European clothes that Anupam's new responsibilities imposed on him. Appearances matter, so one must be well-dressed. The first week after this, Anupam went out to his work with an unfailing regularity, beaming in his well-tailored suit. He bought new ties and socks, and took great care that the knot of his tie conformed to the fashion of the moment. And Surama kept the trousers neatly folded under the bed-quilt, picked up the handkerchiefs her husband carelessly flung about, and went about the house all day, doing endless and

perhaps unnecessary work. For the time, she was the happiest woman in Calcutta:

So it was not without some misgiving that she had noticed her husband lying down in bed right after his mid-day meal. In his sort of job, perhaps, one did not have to be too particular about attending office, but does it do to loll in bed all day? . . . But Anupam did get out of bed, after all, slipped on a *punjabi*, and said: "Well, I'm off."

"You won't put on those things?" asked Surama, glancing at the pair of trousers resting on the back of the chair.

"No, it's too hot today."

Surama felt a sudden twang of pain as she looked at her husband's pinched, drawn face. One could feel humid August heat like pin-pricks all over one's body. To have to go out in this heat was no fun. "Is it possible that you may stay at home just to-day?" she asked at last.

"It doesn't matter very much either way . . . And I wasn't just feeling well," Anupam added after a pause.

"In that case, you might as well stay at home. Why not send in an application asking for leave? I suppose it would be all right then."

Anupam smiled benevolently. "We don't have to apply for leave," he said. "We may stay away from office as long as we like, and no questions to answer, if you please!"

"As long as you like! You don't say so!"

"That's just it. What do they care as long as they get business?"

"But where's the business to come from if you . . . if you just stay away all the time?"

"These are things you won't understand," said Anupam, decisively.

Surama was silenced. Truth to tell, she hadn't been able to get any hang of the matter till now. What sort of employment was it that allowed such extraordinary freedom? But what does *she* know about the affairs of the world?

Without another word, Anupam took off his *punjabi*, lay down on the bed again, and was soon fast asleep. When he rose, it was past five. Surama brought in his tea. After tea, he put on a spotless white *dhoti* and *punjabi*, and went out, perhaps to see a friend.

The next two days he spent in similar fashion. Surama worried, but when she tried to remind him of the work that must be waiting for him, he replied in the coolest possible manner, as if nothing in the world was the matter. "You seem to be quite a child," he said in his most charming manner. "It's the agents who do all the work, you know. Why should I knock about more than I need? Two of them are seeing me this very afternoon."

And indeed he had visitors in the afternoon. A couple of smart-looking young men they were, and Anupam laughed and talked with them a great deal. Surama, herself invisible, entertained them with tea, with *luchi* and *halooa*, capping it all with excellent little *pans*. She was quite pleased.

Anupam was in a terrible rush next morning. He had to catch a train to Bhatpara where he expected

hook a really big case. He gulped some rice and a little fish curry, put on his European clothes, got two rupees out of his mother, and rushed out. When Surama sat to her mid-day meal, she could eat but little. She thought of her husband's scanty and hurried meal, and as soon as the clock struck three, sat with an oil-stove to prepare what she knew he liked best with his tea.

At the office they told Anupam that a representative of a rival Company had already grabbed the Bhatpara case. So he had nothing to do but sit there and talk, just talk. He spent a couple of hours in more or less lively conversation, and then, going out with a friend, made a tour of several offices in the Clive Street locality. He was a sociable young man, had acquaintances all over the city, and all his acquaintances liked him. So the time passed quite agreeably, on the whole, what with the cups of tea and *pans*, and fascinating speculations on making millions. Still, there's a point when one gets a bit tired of knocking about in the sun.

In the evening Surama asked him, "You got the case?"

"Which case do you mean?"

"The one at Bhatpara, of course."

Anupam could not bring himself to tell the truth.

"Not yet," he said, briefly.

"You mean you'll go another day?"

"I don't think you need bother about these things. I know my business," said Anupam with an air of offended dignity.

Busy and efficient-looking in his royal robes, he

carried on pretty well for the next week, going out and returning home at the usual hours. It was only on the following Sunday that he broke the news to his wife.

The mid-day meal was just over, heavy and late as on all Sundays, and Surama was thinking of lying down for a while. "Will you lie on the mat or on the bed?" she asked her husband.

"Listen, I've got something to tell you."

"What is it?"

"I've just had another offer, you know," Anupam said, casually.

"What kind of an offer?"

"A gentleman's starting a business, and wants to make me a partner. We are looking out for office accommodation in Lyons Range. We shall have a real big office, and I shall be the manager, of course, my partner is keen on *that* point. I shall have a room of my own in the office, with a telephone—and I suppose there'll have to be a phone in my house as well, so that you will be able to send me any message that you want to during the day. It's good, don't you think?"

"But what's the business?" asked Surama.

"Oh, of all sorts. The man—I mean my partner—deals in all sorts of things—paper and timber, coal and jewelry, and—oh, heaps of odds and ends. He's really a big businessman, and very rich, of course. We are starting on no more than ten thousand, but he has promised another ten, and if need be, he'll see it up to fifty thousand, you know. I am getting a salary of two hundred, rising up to five hundred, besides two per cent. of the profits which you can put down at a couple of thousand a year. And the office car, of

course, will be exclusively for my use. We shall need about a dozen clerks, and I was wondering whether you could think of any suitable lads in this connection."

Surama listened attentively, but didn't say anything for a while. "You are then throwing away your Insurance job?" she asked at last.

"I think the most sensible thing to do about it is to chuck it," Anupam smiled, but not very brightly. "The pay is ridiculous, and it's a lousy job having to go about in the hot sun all day."

"You've got to work anyway, haven't you?" Surama fixed her quiet, dark eyes on her husband, but he turned away his face.

"Why, don't you see," he said, "how very much better *this* is! It will be *my* office. I'll be boss there. My partner is a terribly busy man, and won't be able to do much supervision. He'll have to depend on me for everything, and that makes a world of difference, doesn't it, now?"

"You are sure you'll be able to run so big a business? Pretty hard work it will mean."

"Oh, don't worry about *that*," Anupam smiled a little smile. "I'll have to look up one or two clerks, and that's about all. I won't have a lot to do at first, with a dozen clerks working under me. We are going to start soon—in fact, as soon as we have been able to fix up suitable office premises."

A sudden suspicion crept into Surama's mind. "You haven't— you haven't thrown away your Insurance job?" she asked.

"Oh, no— never of course," he said, smiling.

Anupam, and he took a great deal of care to seem quite careless.

Surama grew pale. "Oh, you have!" she faltered. "Shouldn't you have asked Father's opinion?"

"Useless fuss!" Anupam exclaimed, very nearly losing his temper. "A fat lot *he* understands of business! Of course I have done the right thing now that everything is settled, and the Company going to be registered. Oh, don't worry," he added, in a different tone, "I am glad to think I will be able to make Father happy at last. Give me one year, and he won't have anything to worry about."

Surama thrilled to hear her husband say so, but deep in her heart she remained a little doubtful. "But business is so uncertain, isn't it?" she ventured. "You should have thought twice before throwing away a fixed income."

"Fixed income be blowed!" Anupam cried impatiently. "I asked for my dues, but they are just sitting tight on it, the mean rascals!"

"What! You don't mean that they are withholding your pay? Is that possible? You didn't have a row with them, did you?"

"Is it possible," began Anupam in a loud, excited voice, "is it *possible* for a self-respecting gentleman *not* to quarrel with them, the pettifogging thieves! So I gave them a bit of my mind, and I am glad I did!"

"Oh, I see," said Surama, in a hollow voice.

Anupam flung a quick glance at her. "I say, don't be silly. Don't look as if the bottom has been knocked out of your world. I'm glad to have got off—and for heaven's sake, *don't* look so tearful; for a

lousy job like that can be had any day of the week, you know."

But Surama did *not* know; how could she? In fact, one could be an Insurance canvasser any day for the mere asking, but the amount of work one would have to put in so as to make as much as fifty rupees a month was far more than Anupam could manage. But Surama, in her innocence, could not help feeling as she did. "I hope you are right," she sighed. "But days are hard, and I always thought it was a nice job, taking one thing with another."

"Oh, you thought so, did you?" said Anupam, in a tone of utter contempt. "Have you no imagination? Why *can't* you realise what this business will mean. I'm going in for something really big. Just wait a couple of years and see what happens! Do you know, my partner was suggesting that I should throw in a little money as well; he would gladly give me ten per cent. of the profits then. And do you know what that means? Twenty thousand a year, if you please." Anupam chuckled. "Do you think Father will be able to put together, let us say, five thousand if I ask him? Five thousand isn't much."

"You might ask him," said Surama very coldly.

"I was wondering," said Anupam after a little pause, "whether your father could help me in any way."

Surama grew white and then red. "You know how poor he is," she said, in a toneless voice.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Anupam, with a laugh that was far too cheery for the occasion. "Not in the least. I didn't mean it, really. In any case,

I am going to succeed in this business. You may take it for granted. Not that there isn't some risk in it, but you've got to take risks unless you are content to rot in a rat's hole. Nothing stake, nothing have."

"What's the business?" asked Surama for the second time, and for the second time her husband answered, "Oh, of all sorts."

"But I don't know that you weren't a little rash in throwing away the job. You would have got used to it, might have got to like it even . . . you see, you didn't give it a chance at all."

"Oh, rot! Don't you see, it isn't a job for a gentleman. I'm fed up. Those scurvy fellows had the cheek to talk to me in a way as if they were my lords and masters. I am not one to tolerate insults," said Anupam with an impressive flash of his eyes.

"You say they didn't even pay you?" asked Surama, fixing a narrow gaze on her husband.

"I couldn't get a pice out of them, the thieves!"

"But is it possible?" explained Surama in genuine indignation.

"Everything is possible for *them*."

"But whoever has heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Surama. "Why don't you set the law on them? I think something must be done about it."

"Oh, bother! I haven't the time to take all that trouble—you see, I shall have to be *very* busy about this business. Let the scoundrels keep their beggarly wages, if they please—what do I care?"

"But you can't allow yourself to be—cheated!"

"If you only heard the things I told them!" Anupam chuckled. "Yes, I gave it them hot, that I

did. I got even with them, I can assure you. When we have done good business for some time, I shall have great pleasure in appointing the Manager of that rotten firm the Head Clerk of *my* office."

Anupam gave a loud laugh. He was cocksure; there seemed to be nothing in the world to prevent him from making Big Money in Big Business. As a matter of fact, the days that followed this conversation found him hectically active. He was always going out and coming in. He had appointments in the most out-of-the-way places and at fantastic hours. It was really too bad that there wasn't a telephone in the house; he must have one early next month. What was most remarkable, his pockets seemed to be full. There was money, and besides money, there were illustrated booklets. He always carried about descriptive folders of motor cars, for he would soon have to bother about buying the office car.

A fortnight passed in this way. Anupam was seldom at home except at meal-times and bed-time. His mother, who began to feel anxious about his health, mildly reproved him, but he would not listen to counsel. What could he do? He had to see to everything himself, and he hadn't a moment's time. He received typewritten letters in large, important-looking envelopes. He had all sorts of visitors. Well, here was something to do, at last. Surama herself felt assured of her husband's future. It seemed this was the sort of thing he was meant for, and one needn't be at all surprised if he did splendidly in it. One never knows how much a man is really worth, one can never judge by appearances.

Days passed. Anupam continued to be active, but ceased to be hectic. And to Surama it seemed the most natural thing. Things were beginning to settle down at last. It was just when she had completed in her mind the picture of her husband as a successful businessman that she received a shock.

"Somebody's selling a tea-shop near College Square," said Anupam one night, in bed. The statement was rather sudden, and Surama waited in silence. "I was wondering whether it would do to take that up," said her husband, his voice trembling a little. "The man can be bought off for five hundred chips. Now don't you think Father can find that money?"

"Why!" Surama gave out a little gasp. "Whatever should you want to buy a tea-shop for?"

"One can run it," answered Anupam solemnly. "It means a net monthly profit of two hundred rupees."

"Oh!" A little cry escaped Surama's throat. "And you said the man was selling it for *five* hundred! He must be quite mad!"

"I'm not so sure it would be exactly two hundred." It was rather odd how quickly Anupam toned down. "A hundred and fifty—well, you can be sure about one hundred, at any rate. The man's a stickler and haggles a lot, but I think he can be brought round to five hundred, cash down. He has fallen ill, and wants to wind up and get away."

"But haven't you too much on your hands already? That business—"

"Yes, of course I have that business to look after," Anupam broke in a little impatiently. "Why not have the tea-shop as well? It wouldn't mean much

trouble. You pay a servant twenty rupees, and that's all you have to do. Of course I can't wait on the customers myself!" Anupam laughed, tickled by the very idea. "It's a good site, you know. There are about half a dozen colleges round about, and there's quite a crowd of students. It's a running concern as it is, and I guess the man has put by a lovely lot of money."

"But you can't run a shop by proxy. Say what you will, you must attend to it yourself."

"Oh, of course I'll give it a look up from time to time," said Anupam breezily. "It doesn't do to depend too much on one's assistants. The more I think of it, Surama, the more I like the idea. I'll talk to Father about it tomorrow. Anybody who is not a fool would jump at it. It might develop it into a fashionable restaurant in the course of time. But then we must bring it over to Chowringhee."

It was only then that Surama remembered that it was quite a time since her husband had talked about that business they were going to start. Suddenly a sort of fear seized her. "How are you getting on with that business?" she asked, in a very low voice.

"The preliminaries are nearly over." That was all Anupam said, without much enthusiasm. It even struck Surama that he was not inclined to discuss the subject.

"You said you would start work this month?"

"Yes, I'll buy the tea-shop," said Anupam, as if he had not heard his wife's last remark. "Don't you think Kalipado, our cook, is quite reliable? And would Father very much mind if I took him over to the

shop? Here the poor fellow slaves for eight rupees, and I'll give him twenty—even twenty-five, if he's really good at the job. Just think what a staggering lift it would be for him!"

Perhaps the contemplation of Kalipado's tremendous lift put him into so serene a frame of mind that he fell asleep in a few minutes.

Days, weeks and months passed. Things stood still, at any rate for Anupam. When it pleased him, he slept away all day; and when the fit was on him, he put on his European clothes and wandered about in the city. He had a monthly tram ticket, and he went where he liked. He was quite at home in the dingy lanes of Burra Bazar, and he was often to be seen in one or the other of the numerous offices round about Dalhousie Square. He was the busiest of all men, having nothing to do. Gigantic rivers of money were always flowing past him, whirlpools of wealth that roughly threw him down on the shoals every time he tried to plunge. Back home weary and sticky with sweat—oh, it had been a strenuous day, on the whole!

This aimless wandering sometimes got on his nerves. But he propped himself up by the thought that he was a businessman, and it was only in the fitness of things that he should be knocked about a bit before the Grand Chance came. That business scheme he had talked about to his wife had fallen through, for the man who was to have financed the show had backed out in the end. The swine! Well, the world seemed to be full of such men—sharks, crooks and cut-throats—and what could poor Anupam do, being the only good man in a world of scoundrels?

Well, he wasn't going to be beaten by the tricky gangsters; he had already started a small business of his own. A friend of his ran an office in Clive Row, and thither he went every day and sat in a chair for a couple of hours. It was true that nobody yet knew what the business exactly was, even Surama was quite in the dark—but she needn't be told everything beforehand. Let her wait—and one fine morning she will find her husband exuding prosperity.

So much might be said for the present that he wasn't thinking of the tea-shop any longer. Running a shop—pooh! It wasn't a gentleman's job, really! What would people think if he talked of being off to his shop? "Going to office" sounded much better, anyway. And one's own office, too! So Anupam kept going to office, and his own office, mind!

Thus passed a year. Meanwhile, his father had been hacking away at his job, and wearing a coat that manifestly needed laundering. On his return from office at the day's end, the old man would lie flat on a mat. He would pay off a big chunk of debt on the first day of every month and begin a hunt for fresh loans by the seventh. It was only seldom that father and son met.

One evening, however, as Anupam was just going out, he ran into his father in the little sitting room. Anupam was tripping out with an air of great hurry, but the old man called after him. Coughing once or twice he said rather shamefacedly :

"I was wanting to tell you that there's a vacancy in our office just now."

Anupam remained silent as if this information did not concern him at all.

"I've mentioned you to the Sahib," the old man continued, "and he has given me hope."

"What's the job?"

"Not bad in its way. It starts at fifty rupees—"

"Oh, fifty rupees!" Anupam uttered the words very softly, as if he had been struck nearly dumb by some preposterous, grotesque suggestion.

The old man cleared his throat. "The scale is from fifty to a hundred and twenty-five. And there's always the chance of your being put on to the senior grade which goes right up to three hundred. I don't think it's worth throwing away."

"What should I do with fifty rupees!" murmured Anupam.

"Well, since nothing better is turning up . . .", said the old man in a humble, apologetic tone. "I've got an application ready, and rather think that it had better be sent in tomorrow."

Anupam did not wish to bandy words with his father, for whom he felt a sort of pity which he kept concealed under the guise of indifference. And the next day he signed the application all right. "Poor Father!" he remarked to his wife, "I'm afraid he has gone slightly out of his mind through want of money."

Surama looked up with questioning eyes.

"He's wanting to put me on to a job worth fifty rupees! Ha—Ha!" Anupam laughed, but it was not very hearty laughter.

"There are many who are perishing for a fifty-rupee job", said Surama quietly.

"It may be as you say," Anupam shrugged his shoulders; "but *my* case is different. Business is my line, and I'm going to stick to it. You don't know what a brilliant scheme I'm carrying in my head. Wait till I've put it through—and then, oh, then we shall live in a fine house and drive a splendid motor-car."

Silently, Surama listened to this prognostication. She did not even want to know what the wonderful scheme was. What should she, a mere woman, understand of these intricate processes of making big money?

"If one keeps one's wits about one," Anupam continued, "it's nothing to make five hundred a month in this city. Look at the Marwaris." He looked proudly at his wife, as if, in some inscrutable way, he was responsible for the commercial success of the Marwaris. "I'll tell you what," he added in a whisper, though there wasn't anybody else in the room, "I'm in close touch with a very big Marwari merchant, and have got the ins and outs of business at my finger-tips. . . . Here, could you give me a rupee?" He brought his tirade to an abrupt and rather unexpected conclusion.

"A rupee?"

"Now don't say you haven't got it. You must have some cash on hand, seeing that the daily bazar expenses are in your keeping now. Well, if a rupee is too much, give me eight annas."

"I'll give you a rupee," said Surama, and she fished out two bright eight-anna bits from her personal savings. She had got into the habit of saving up every

little coin that she could manage. It was not much; a small collection consisting mainly of one-anna and two anna bits; but even that might help. In fact, this was not the first time that she was able to come to her husband's aid in her small way.

The next day, Anupam's father returned from office with a small bundle of books under his arm. "Have a look at these books," he told his son. "They might call you for an interview."

"Oh! Must they interview one for a fifty-rupee job?"

"I think you'd better look up the Income-Tax Laws," said the old man. "It would be all right if you could say just a word or two if they asked you questions."

"Father's going clean out of his mind," Anupam said to his wife. "Just fancy! he's asking me to study Income-Tax Law! Perhaps the next thing he'll want me to do is to sit for an examination!" Anupam laughed loudly, perhaps too loudly.

"I see no harm in that," said Surama. "I've never seen you touch a book, and this might brush up your learning."

"Learning! So this is your idea of learning! Income-Tax Law! Oooh!" Anupam screamed with laughter.

He did not as much touch those books. And his father, returning home in the evening, began to pore over those volumes, his silver-rimmed spectacles dangling on his nose. For some days it became quite a frequent occurrence; the old man was often to be seen

with a book in his hand and his forehead bewrinkled, trying to master the complexities of Income-Tax Law.

One day Anupam saw him at it. "Have you seen Father?" he told Surama with a laugh. "Does he think that *I* shall learn things if *he* reads books?"

"Oh, you can see that, can you?"

"Haven't I told him that I don't care a hang about that niggardly job? It's a pity he won't see my point. Don't think about it any more."

After a few days, however, Anupam was called for an interview.

"Surely you are going?" Surama asked timidly.

"Well, just to please poor Father—" said Anupam. And he put on his European clothes and off he went. Returning home he said: "The Sahib seemed to take a fancy to me. Father's in his good books, too!"

"So you think—" Surama finished the sentence with a meaningful gaze.

"I was wondering if the Sahib wouldn't be disappointed if I turned down the offer," said Anupam breezily. "Of course I won't have to stick it long; things will be different soon—oh, very different indeed. But meanwhile, this might do for my pocket-expenses, don't you think?"

"Pocket-expenses are all you need for the present", said Surama.

"Oh, don't say *that*! A mouthful of rice isn't all one wants. And you can see that Father is finding it increasingly difficult to keep things going. Well, my precious Marwari thinks that I might be rolling in money in six months' time."

Some more days passed. One evening, on return-

ing home from yet another tour in Burra Bazar, Anupam noticed a shadow on his wife's face. "Is anything the matter?" he asked.

"Father has brought news about that job."

"What is it?" Anupam tried to put the question very carelessly, but there was a slight tremor in his voice.

"It has gone to somebody else. Father is heart-broken."

Anupam's face turned pale, but only for a moment. He took a turn in the room and then stood facing his wife. "Good riddance!" he cried. "It would have been a bother if they'd taken me in, for I couldn't possibly have refused, you know, for poor Father's sake. Now, don't start talking about it, but the fact is that I have decided to concentrate on the Share Market. That's the thing for me! Of course it isn't likely that I shall be able to bring in more than two or three hundred a month in the beginning—that's what comes of not having initial capital. But in the course of a year or two . . . five hundred, six hundred . . . why, a thousand wouldn't be too much to expect. We shall then let out this house and remove to a fine large house with a garden and all that. This is an awful hole that Father has built, don't you think?"

Anupam tried to gaze into Surama's eyes, but her eyes were averted.

Translated from Bengali by the Author

STUART RAY

AUGUSTUS JOHN

"An artist is a dreamer consenting to dream of a real world."—GEORGE SANTAYANA

Chelsea was the home of artists in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Migrations to Bloomsbury or Wimbledon had not then occurred; Chelsea Reach was still touched by the glamour of Whistler, and the Greaves brothers were still boatmen on the Thames at this point. The twilight of the nineteenth century had not lifted from London at that time and Chelsea was small, gay and exquisitely provincial. It was to this quiet retreat that Augustus John came in the late eighties; he burst upon a sedate world where good taste was the criterion of life. In England at that time painting outside the Academy consisted only of the dying Preraphaelitism and the respectable revolt of the New English Art Club, and Chelsea, the centre of the arts, reflected the canons of prevailing good taste in its Morris tapestries and Japanese prints. Augustus John did not affect the predominant taste which made itself manifest, in Putney and South Kensington in reproductions of pictures of Highland cattle knee-deep in English meadows, or in Chelsea in the anæmic maidens of Burne-Jones drooping over spinning wheels or allowing themselves to pose for a moment on endless staircases for the benefit of even more anæmic knights in armour. Now that we have outlived the rebellion

it is interesting to remember into what kind of world John made his *début*.

Augustus John's name is one that has caught the imagination of the public more than that of any other creative artist in England in the last fifty years and England does not easily take an interest in her poets and painters. It is a rare event when a Tennyson, a Swinburne or a Rossetti fires the British imagination. Epstein's name means sculpture to the British press, the name of Elgar would seem synonymous with British music and in the same way that of John is identified with British painting and Bohemianism. For the majority of people the idea of an artist is still that of a man who wears a beard, sandals and corduroy trousers. John's six feet in height and massive carriage, his beard and distinguished head, have the qualities that people expect of an artist, and he is as attractive to his fellow artists as to the layman. There are portraits of him by Orpen, Rothenstein, Nicholson, Epstein and Barney Seale, and caricatures of him by Low. John has been a great deal in the public eye. He has resigned his place in the Academy once and was the centre of a court case when Lord Leverhulme elected to cut off a piece of the portrait John had made of him, an incident which caused great excitement and resulted in demonstrations in the favour of their idol by students of the Slade School of Art.

John arrived at the Slade School at a very early age and at a critical period in the history of that school and English painting. When he came to the Slade the school was going into a golden age of draughtsmanship. His fellow students at that time included William

Orpen, Edna Clarke-Hall, Albert Rutherston and Wyndham Lewis. A tradition of draughtsmanship had been brought from France by Alphonse Legros and handed down through Professor Brown to Henry Tonks. This, and the fact that John was Gaelic and had the inheritance of British linear vision, made him the master of drawing that he is. During the years that he was at the Slade School, Brown and Tonks were responsible for the teaching of drawing. Drawing is a science and all that is required for an understanding of form is a logical approach. Tonks had a sound understanding of drawing and the rare gift of being able to impart it and John brought Celtic imagination to thorough teaching. There is a lack of unity in the British, a Celtic stream which proves itself in the abstract and rhythmical qualities of our art, and it is just this which is the illuminating flame of John's work. He is first and foremost a draughtsman, and the greatest attribute of his drawings is their personal character. They are more than exercises, studies of the figure; they have the unity of pictures, although there is a great difference between the early portrait drawings, mirroring the spirit of Rossetti and influenced by the Renaissance draughtsman, and the brilliant shorthand of the full length study of "Dorelia" in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen.

Portrait painting has passed through many phases in the last two hundred years, from the formal compositions of Gainsborough to the extremely informal portraits of Henry Lamb and the formally informal portraits of John Sargent, but it is difficult to fit Augustus John into the scheme of British portrait

painters. This most unprofessional portrait painter has recorded the appearance of our great men and women for all time; T. E. Lawrence complete in Arab dress is as much the problematical, adolescent scholar drawn into a man of action as the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and his letters reveal, and W. B. Yeats is portrayed in the 1929 portrait as just the oversensitive, and slightly perplexed, metaphysical poet that one would imagine him to be. As the feeling of the stiff little seventeenth century German Courts is made clear to us in the gavottes and *gigues* of Johann Sebastian Bach, so the tempo of the post-war years is present in John's portraits: the disillusion of the twenties and the whole spirit of a decade is present in the portrait of "A Girl in an Orange Jacket" now in the Tate Gallery. Augustus John has done for our age what Holbein did for an earlier one. This first became clear in a big one-man show at the Alpine Galleries in 1921 when it was seen that John was a painter as capable of painting our famous men and society women as he had formerly been of painting gypsy types. His portraits are the only true portraits of this century and stand head and shoulders above all others. He has avoided the slight and effeminate technique of a McEvoy and the bad drawing and flimsiness of a Sargent or an academician such as Eves. But John is not perfect; if the Leonardo smile, vacant and meaningless in *La Gioconda*, is heightened and given meaning in his full length portrait, "The Smiling Woman", and the bravura of Madame Suggia is superb, it is a strained beauty. The "Madame Suggia" is a masterpiece that has nearly come off. The masses of magenta dress are magni-

ficiently disposed; the head and arms represent the most beautiful drawing; I have stayed in front of it long minutes amazed at that exquisite drawing of the cellist's bowing arm, but it remains the portrait of a cello. Sickert discovered that genius is the instinct of self-preservation in a talent and John is not possessed of that instinct to support his great gifts. His strength is in his lyrical quality which will fire a small work with absolute beauty, but his lack of creative stamina will not create an epic. All the initial drive is his, but once that is exhausted there is no power to continue; he has no respect for paint or persons and is a very impatient craftsman. In this lie both his strength and his weakness. John is an artist with the gift of being able to continually surprise his audience. In 1937 his one-man show of portraits of Jamaican Negresses held at Tooth's Gallery, brought to our notice that the spirit was renewed which had produced the succession of society portraits in the immediate post-war years. It was a phoenix act which came at a time when John, who had turned sixty, might have been suspected of being exhausted of anything new. The most striking work in the exhibition was not to be found among the Negress heads. It was his portrait of his wife in middle age. There was more tenderness there than in any other portrait by John that I know. The brilliance and the ease of his painting which made the painter of the "Madame Suggia" such a great virtuoso had disappeared entirely to reveal a very searching work which showed that the artist had turned from the objective to the subjective portrait. The change wrought between the portrait of Madame Suggia and

the portrait of Mrs. John was as great as that to be found between the self-portrait of Rembrandt in his youth and his self-portrait in old age.

It is interesting to trace the influences that have marked John's work. Some of the earliest drawings are related in their technical approach and in feeling to Rossetti. A drawing made at the Slade, a copy of Watteau, is a proof of his interest in that painter in his student days. A little of the melancholy which Rossetti and Watteau have in common is present in most of his works in the years before 1914. After the last war two Spanish influences appear; first Goya and later El Greco. The coarseness of Goya with the splendid artificiality of his court portraits makes occasional appearance in John's paintings during the 1920's. The portrait of his first wife, "The Green Jacket", in the collection of Sir James Dunn, a full length filling a long narrow canvas, reminds one strangely of a Spanish Marquesa by Goya which has become curiously transformed. Now that he is past sixty all the coarseness seems to have burnt itself out and the purity of El Greco to have taken its place, and very recently even El Greco's mannerisms.

When we come to the little figure compositions we turn to another aspect of John's work from which we get no glimpse of the portrait painter. These little *genre* paintings of gypsy life and girls against Dorset or North Wales landscapes seem to bear little relation to the portraits. They are in intention almost entirely decorative and in them qualities of volume and recession seem to be entirely unimportant. In them all is beauty; "Dorelia" leaning against a stone wall in

Dorset will always be an isolated and exquisite thing suspended in a moment of time. These works are dreams painted in the white heat of a waking moment. The idylls of Charles Conder, painted in that same piece of England, are empty fantasy compared with these. In them John has escaped from the studio and society women to test the mettle of his imagination, and the result is something which catches a little of the miraculous stillness of Piero della Francesca and the mystery which is at the heart of Giorgione. Through them we are subject to the direct impact of the visual imagination without any escape into the pale overtones of literary painting. They demonstrate, I believe, the most important fact of John's work ; they are romantic fabric handled with classical tools and are valuable for what they suggest of a creative artist's imagination. The large decorations of Augustus John are not equally interesting nor so successful. In these his lack of stamina is clearly apparent. Two or three times he has attempted large decorations; one of the first, "Galloway", is a charming and delicate sketch but it has none of the weight required of a large work, while the mural decoration, "Lyric Fantasy", in the collection of Hugo Pitman, brilliant though it is in drawing and beautiful in colour, is incomplete and undisciplined; it is no more than a magnificent ruin. It would be absurd to say whether the concentration of a lyric is of less value than the sustained imaginative power of the epic but it is, I think, admissible to criticise John for attempting more than he can manage and for endeavouring to turn the material of a lyric into an epic.

This is but a very curtailed survey of the work of Augustus John and the factors which have influenced his work; it is only an examination of some of the trends of this particular painter's art. The analyst is not a teacher; he assumes that something has been conveyed to the reader by the work under consideration and sets out to explain in terms of the rest of the reader's experience why a work has had the effect that is assumed. It is the ultimate purpose of all contemporary critics, in examining contemporary works of art, to bring the living artist before an audience and to leave to the historian exhaustive examination and the more balanced view of an artist's work which is only able to be taken in the light of time's perspective.

JACK Codd

THE VIGIL

The hut was dark and gloomy, the interior partly obscured by the smoke of a dung fire that curled lazily up into the deepening twilight. Over by the paddy fields a pariah dog gave voice, a long-drawn-out howl that ended in a mournful whimper, carrying far in the still, hot, clammy air. A bullock cart strained up the narrow pebble-strewn track towards the foot-hills, whose many summits were now bathed in the purple mist of fast-descending night, the shafts creaking, and the driver's lithe black body swaying in rhythm with every movement of the sweat-lathered beasts.

But the old man in the hut neither heard, saw nor knew anything of these happenings. All he heard was the slow, agonised breathing of his wife and the faint rustle of the straw, as her restless body sought to ease the pain of swift-approaching death. All he saw were the four mud walls, now fast merging into the blackness of the night, and all he knew was that shortly he would be alone ; alone in his fields ; alone in his hut ; alone ; all alone. He rose slowly, painfully, and lit a tallow candle, and setting it down beside the bed of rushes, once more took up his lonely vigil, the candle spluttering and flickering for a moment, and then settling down to a steady flame, chasing the gathering gloom into the farther corners of the hut, and leaving in its stead two grotesque shadows, leaping and dancing over the floor, over the walls, over the ceiling.

As if deriving some hidden source of strength from that tiny ray of light, the sufferer raised herself on one elbow and, wiping away the sweat from her brow with gnarled, work-soiled hands, she spoke to the old man of days gone by ; and as she spoke, so did the old man's thoughts drift back to those days of long ago

Now he was a youngster once again, plodding stolidly behind his father in the fields, revelling in the good clean smell of the earth and the feel of the loose soil under his naked feet. Yet again he was playing in the rice fields with his brother, now, alas ! long since dead ; and his thoughts swept up and down, through the tangle of his advancing years, through the laughter and the heart-breaks, through the toil and the

happiness of his sixty-seven summers. He well remembered the first time he had met Rana, ah! how pretty she had looked in that green sarree with the double golden border. It had been Durga, and how happy they had been on that day; but a voice crept in remorselessly on his thoughts, "alone", "old man", "all alone". His head drooped, and he lay back with a sigh as the sufferer's voice droned on

The candle was burning low now, spluttering and hissing, the molten tallow spreading in a pool on the floor, little rivulets breaking away and running in tiny streams until, out of range of the heat, they cooled and hardened into an intricate pattern; and black night detached itself from the far corners and moved closer, ever closer.

The old man had not moved, he still lay back, head drooping; whilst the sufferer, knowing life to be fading rapidly, raised herself yet higher, and speaking slowly and haltingly, begged him to be happy in the remembrance of those far-off days, telling him that when he had ploughed his last lonely furrow, she would be watching and waiting for him.

But the old man did not answer. A cool wind heralding the Monsoon blew through the door-way, and the candle, with a last despairing splutter, went out. With it passed away the spark of life that had clung so tenaciously to Rana, and darkness swiftly claimed the hut. And darkness stayed. No new candle replaced the old, for in that lonely hut all life had flown.

The old man had died fully five minutes before.

HORACE ALEXANDER

BIRDS AND BIRD STUDY IN INDIA

In his travel-book, *Jesting Pilate*, Mr. Aldous Huxley expresses the surprise and astonishment he felt, on his arrival in Bombay, at the abundance and ubiquity of birds. In the plains of India, especially in the north, no traveller with eyes in his head can fail to see birds. If you travel, for instance, from Delhi to Allahabad you may see in the course of a single day huge sarus cranes, as tall as the cultivator toiling in the adjacent field, three or four different species of stork, two kinds of ibis, half a dozen sorts of heron or allied creatures, peacocks, vultures, kites and endless smaller birds—mynahs of several sorts, king-crows, crow-pheasants, many doves, rollers or blue jays, pied and white-breasted kingfishers, bee-eaters, flashes of weaver-birds and sparrows, parrakeets, swallows, swifts, sandpipers and many more. Every segment of telegraph-wire seems to be peopled by birds on the look-out for insect prey. Travel through Bengal, and every paddy-field has its troop of beautiful white egrets and paddy-birds. Whether you live in Bombay, in Delhi, in Calcutta or in some other city, the sky above your head will be full of soaring kites and vultures; you will be wakened in the morning by the deafening clamour of innumerable house-crows; before dusk you may want to stop your ears to the shrieking of hundreds and thousands of parrakeets assembling to roost; or

you may grow weary of the loud and unmusical cries of the koel and the brain-fever bird or the monotonous call of the coppersmith. Birds are everywhere; it is hard to get away from them. Even as you sit at your desk, a crow will come and squawk in your ear. The colours of Indian birds are gorgeous; but their voices, with few exceptions, are poor. The fluting of the bulbul (who was the villain who lied in his dictionary that bulbul is the Hindusthani word for a nightingale?), the sweet-toned twitter of the common sunbird, some of the chattering notes of the mynahs, and the clear and rich song of the magpie-robin are exceptions; but it is the colour and variety of Indian bird-life, not its music, that impress the visitor from the West.

Yet it is not unfair to the few great ornithologists who have worked on Indian birds in recent times to state in general terms that the intensive study of Indian bird-life has not begun. Hume, Jerdon, Stuart-Baker, Whistler and Ticehurst, are among the names of the chief pioneers of Indian ornithology; most of their work, inevitably, has been concerned with the elements of the problem—the classification of species and the rough working out of the geographical distribution of each. Whistler in his excellent *Handbook* carries us a stage further, with his well-phrased and accurate descriptions of nesting-habits, songs and other characteristics. Salim Ali's book should not be judged by the plates, which often leave much to be desired. (It is tragic that the accomplished artist, who painted the pictures for *The Birds of Burma*, has been killed in the War; with his eye for characteristic attitudes and his sureness of line and colour, he might in another

twenty years have provided a fully illustrated and complete book of Indian birds.)

Salim Ali not only follows and in some respects improves on Dewar's attempts to assist in the task of identification of the commoner Indian birds; he has also advanced into a new realm with his essays on nesting behaviour, on migration, on the usefulness of birds, and on bird watching. His map showing the recovery of birds "ringed" in India and reported later from various parts of northern Asia—one even from Germany and one from Hungary—suggests at once how much still lies hidden about the movements of birds, waiting to be unravelled as soon as India, like North America and Europe, is covered with eager students of the life of birds.

Whence comes the insatiable inquisitiveness of modern man into the ways of beasts, birds, fishes, insects, plants—indeed, into all the intricacy of life on the earth? Historically, one can find the germ of this very modern intensive "nature study" in the writings of Aristotle and Pliny. It made no advance through the thousand years of Europe's "Middle Ages", and it was only the revived study of Greek literature that slowly begat modern biological science and in particular the study and classification of birds.

Sir Thomas Browne and a few other isolated writers in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries showed some curiosity about the lives and behaviour of birds; at the end of the eighteenth century stands the robust figure of Gilbert White of Selborne, the first great English field naturalist and ornithologist. The names of Linnæus in Sweden, Buffon in France

and other naturalists of that age in various parts of Europe and America indicate that this department of mental activity was developing all over Christendom at one and the same time.

The Indian attitude to birds seems to be roughly similar to that of medieval Europe. The cultivator and other countrymen have local names for the commoner species, and can tell you something about their habits; but such country lore is probably the same mixture of fact and fable that one still finds among the unlearned (and even the semi-educated) in the West. But profound and insatiable curiosity—the thirst to know, and to know more and more and more, to understand why some birds migrate and others are sedentary, to estimate the extent of avian intelligence, even to know the scarcer species as well as the commoner ones, and to learn how to identify them by voice and by mannerism, as well as by form and size and colour-pattern—all this and much more, which has become a consuming passion for scores of modern Westerners, seems wholly alien to the Eastern mind. India has developed to a unique extent a respect for all forms of life; her people have allowed the sub-human creatures to multiply with so little interference that even the depredations of monkeys and peacocks, consuming the hard-won produce of human labour, are tolerated. But an Englishman with binoculars trying to identify small birds in the tree-tops is as alien and harmlessly mad to the Indian mind as the ash-covered *fakir* is to the Englishman.

So far the English influence on India in this matter has hardly got beyond the childish stage which

England itself grew out of thirty or forty years ago.. Indians who like to ape Europeans have learnt to shoot birds; they have learnt to appreciate Zoos and Museums; but the study of wild birds in their natural haunts has not got far. It is depressing to find a so-called "ornithologist expert" who thinks the koel and brain-fever bird are the same species and plunges from one cocksure mis-statement about Indian birds to another.

"Eha's" writings on Indian birds have a flavour of the books of W. H. Hudson; but there seems to be no writer in India so far who has turned scientific birdlore into serious literature, as Edmund Selous, Eliot Howard and some of the younger generation have done in England. These Englishmen of the latest generation have their counterpart in Central Europe and in the United States. In India, so far, the name of Salim Ali seems to stand alone.

The visiting bird-lover finds himself asking all sorts of questions to which there is as yet no answer. How is it that the common mynah is spread all over India but that its close relative, the bank mynah, with apparently identical habits, which lives beside it, mixing with it freely and in great abundance over parts of the U. P. and adjacent districts, is absent from the rest of the Peninsula? What circumstances govern the distribution and comparative abundance of such closely related species as the jungle babbler, the white-headed babbler and the large grey babbler? Why is the blue-tailed bee-eater so patchy in its distribution, and to what extent does it migrate? Have the

migrations of gulls on the Ganges or of the vast flocks of waders on the muddy shores of South West Bengal been closely studied? Such questions are endless. The more they are studied, the more new questions will arise.

The writer of this essay happens to have paid special attention to that large family of little song-birds, the warblers, and especially the *phylloscopi*, or willow-warblers. Admittedly they are difficult to differentiate. Ticehurst in his monograph suggests that some are impossible to distinguish in the field. My own impression is that, given a good light and good binoculars, when they are in spring plumage they may be easier to determine alive than dead. You can never get a skin to show the distinctive colour pattern or contrasting shades of colour quite as neatly after death as when it clothes the live frame of the bird. Fortunately, too, several of the willow-warblers that haunt India in the winter prefer to search for insects on the ground or in low scrub rather than in high foliage. Even in the course of fifteen months that have not included one day given wholly to bird-watching it has been my luck to detect several individuals of one of these little willow-warblers some five hundred miles or more further south-west than Ticehurst allows for its winter range.

An incident in connection with willow-warblers leads me to quite another matter. One day, when I stopped to watch a party of willow-warblers flitting about the tops of some sugarcane in Bengal, my companion, an agricultural expert with wide experience

of field work, assured me that they were feeding on seeds! Perhaps the agricultural colleges of India might think it worth while to give their pupils a little elementary knowledge of the differences between seed-eating and insect-eating birds as, for instance, in the difference in the shape of their beaks. An agriculturist who accuses warblers of eating his seeds ought to be sent back to college for a refresher course.

The A B C of economic ornithology may not yet have been taught in India; but at least one great Indian artist can see a bird, not as a fanatic V in the sky or as a disembodied blotch in his landscape, but as pied mynah, as red-vented bulbul, as white-breasted kingfisher, as brahminy kite. The Acharya of Santiniketan, the father of modern Bengali art, Abanindranath Tagore, has read W. H. Hudson and the new bird literature of the West, and he belongs to this new generation himself. He has the eye that sees the significant difference between species and species.

It is here that the artist and the scientist can meet. The artist must see more than the ordinary man can see of the beauty of form and colour; the scientist must learn to see more than the common man's eye can discern of the significant detail that distinguishes one form from another. Let the scientist learn to see distinctions and differences in life and not only after death, let the poet learn to watch with the patience of the scientist till his vision is perfect, then their two worlds will be one.

What has this to do with bird study in India? I think the connection is something like this. The

study of wild birds helps to satisfy two cravings in the mind of man to-day. The modern man wants to know more of the truth about his environment. The desire to "conquer nature" involves a desire to uncover every possible secret of nature's grand and intricate design. In a world of violence and ugliness and disharmony men also crave something outside themselves which is instinct with living beauty. Birds have beauty of colour, of form, of voice, of motion; their beauty is as varied as the forms of the clouds in the sky. Bird study is not a means of escape from reality. Birds are real enough; like men, they often die of plague or starvation; they compete for food; bird-nature is red in beak and claw. But, in spite of all this, their lives are ordered by rhythm, by harmony, by what our minds register as beauty. Man cannot return to the un-intelligent order and rhythm of bird and beast but the study of the natural order may help man to achieve a conscious, deliberately constructed order of his own. It will only satisfy his craving if it is instinct with beauty, deliberately created, laboriously achieved.

When India rides out of the intellectual backwater, in which the steel-frame so complacently tries to hold her, and joins in the modern world's urgent search after truth and beauty not only in their vaster dimensions but in their intimate minutiae, her sons and daughters will have much to tell as they unravel the secrets of biology in their own land. When the stories of India's myriad birds have been told with that capacity for identification with the objects of affection which characterises the traditional Indian outlook, man will understand better the nature of his environment; he

will be able to estimate more truly his own place in the natural order. But it is not only the end of the adventure that holds out promise of reward; the real reward is found in the endlessly fascinating study of all the intricacies and intimacies of living creatures.

WILLIAM BUCHAN

(1)

Only the buzzard and the kite
in predatory purpose steel
glide, stall and smoothly wheel
beside me at this height.

The falcon-headed hills now plunge
clean and straight for their quarry :
my rabbit soul no parry
knows for that searing lunge.

Stab with your beaks of ice, lay bare
such mortifying part :
strip the fat from my heart
and give the hawks their share.

Wind from the snowline search, and when
you need no longer scour—
let me learn from that hour
a way to live among men.

(2) MONSOON

The rain has fallen fallen fallen Oh
a heavy thing no longer to be held
tumbled in tubes of glass and smashed in drops
as cold and large as marbles :
thus for hours.

The paddy fields before me stretch away
that were a desert, parching, yesterday,
red earth and searing grass, all shimmering
like heat itself, and now are silvery ponds.
And on the near horizon feathers, fronds,
of jungle-trees, all greens that ever were,
Mango and Tamarind—
and Gul Mohur
that's one wide-blooming flower in sunlight
soberly glows.

The sky's a blanket of grey wool,
sagging and still.
At last it's cool,
at last my eyes can open to the full
and see the cranes fly past, their whiteness dimmed
mirrored in water, and the kind tender green
which does not glitter,
for there is no Sun !

The rains have quenched it, and it hurts no more.

This, truly, is a respite to enjoy;
it's gone, that vast and brassy molten gong
that swung and clanged and battered up the sky—
the iron that stung and struck and seared and
scorched,
worse than a swarm of bees, my enemy—
it's gone and I can stare
and soothe my eyes with green
and the soft-silver flood.

Oh, I am well aware
this is no friendly country and that not for me
ripens the Mango nor the Tamarind
nor to make my heart stir
blazes the Gul Mohur.

Yet I this respite have
and this moist seeking wind
blows the green-fingered willows in my blood.
The rain-soaked distances
are childhood's boundless Eden and the lawns
and friendly fields I knew
and may not know again.

From out beyond the cavalcading seas
cleansing the lies and dirt, the greed and pain,
falls on my eyes
a light, cold English rain.

GRAHAM CHERRY

(1) SEPARATION

Prison the winds with fingers; say of the seas
'Soft synonyms of silence'; dare to call
The Poles 'dear twins'; build infamous ironies,
As, 'Nadir and Zenith are identical';
Sing to the lion, 'He shall lie with the lamb';
Inform the meteor of his tortoise gait;
Title Homeric thunder 'An epigram'—
But breathe not 'love' about this whirl of hate:

For ours was interplanetary conjunction—
Neighbours in body, our minds jumped apart,
Swift to resume the intercepted function
Of orbits, crossing: O parable the heart
With the anti-climax and truth of our long lie;
Understand—you are you, and I am I!

(2) THE FAMILIAR

Suddenly, in the *morning*—

Yes, I will come upon you suddenly,

Taking you unawares;

And you will shrink from me,

Holding up frail arms vainly to fend me off.

But I shall come unassailable,

Having identity at last.

I have been too long patient, too long willing

To have you hold me battered under, inert:

But I am resolved you shall acknowledge me now,

And I will be merciless as the astounding dawn

After long darkness.

I will come forward to deny your truths;

I will beat down your pinnacles of falsehood,

And crumple them into minute reluctant dust

Beneath my brazen heel.

Cover your dear prerogatives how you will,

They shall be sought out, naked all and ashamed;

For I will come as a chill wind;

I will force your sanctuary;

And I will terribly blast them.

From unremembered abysses I will come;

And the black spiders of the night

Will suddenly turn into fiery dragons,

And you will tremble and be aghast,

And your limbs will be as water,

And you will not find it in you to disavow

The apparition of your Unheeded Self

When I come, as I promise,

Suddenly, in the *morning*!

(3) SPITFIRES

Space !

Space for our grace, leaping impetuous from horizon
to horizon :

Space for our climbing ecstasy,
When the Merlins boom
Like the drums of doom,
Wires ascream as we zoom aloft,
Shaming the Sun with gleaming speed—
Up and up, conquering space :
More space !

Give us more space !

More, more space to set the skies athrob with the
boom of the Merlins !

That we may climb, climb, and bank, bank, and
dive, dive, dive,
Till Earth dizzies beneath the glory of our leaping
and falling !

Space, space, space for the Spitfires !

SUDHINDRANATH DATTA

JAMINI ROY

I

The ancients proclaimed that reality was an antimony; and the cyclic process of history has brought us back to a dialectic which, while it calls itself "scientific", believes in a mystical union of logical opposites. Yet, even to-day, the law of identity reigns in solitary splendour throughout the civilised world; and, as we lack the medieval leisure that prompted schoolmen to interminable disputations before ostracizing any unorthodox deduction, so propositions other than tautologies seem to us to be self-contradictory. Thus truth and platitude are now synonymous in our understanding; and the labour-saving devices of oversimplification have become so universally available that, when confronted by the paintings of Jamini Roy with their patently Indian themes and technique, we are startled to hear that the artist began his career as a portraitist in the grand European style. Moreover, such surprise is not always the result of ignorance or innocence; the few competent art critics we have fall into the same popular error; and, if they do not know, they invent, if they know, they distort the details of this man's life, in order to keep intact the monadism of the slothful simpleton.

In sober fact, his earliest portraits were noticeably influenced by Whistler; and it is only by enquiring

into the anatomy of this unexpected inspiration that we shall understand the unity that lies behind the diversity of Jamini Roy's achievements. Outwardly there was nothing to warrant it. For here was another of those unmanageable, albeit unintelligent, youths lured into the Calcutta Government School of Art by the prospect of bohemian excesses only to discover, when it was too late, that the institution was as dead as a mummy, so dead, in fact, that contemporary European art was quite unknown there, and bad reproductions of the works of Millais, Leighton and Poynter were elevated to the status of honoured classics. Moreover, thanks to the Theosophists, India had suddenly become aware of her mystic past; and the discovery was upsetting enough for even our few talented painters to discard composition and draughtsmanship in favour of obliterating washes of supposedly Japanese origin. Our rulers then were also sporting the woolly liberalism of the pre-war brand; and, having, due to the Minto-Morley Reforms, admitted Sinha to the custodianship of law and order, they could not, in decency, exclude the intrusion of "Oriental Art" into the Art School. This was undoubtedly a sound piece of administrative policy; but its nett results in the teaching of art were the permanent banishment of all lay figures from that sacred precinct where unclad models had never been welcomed, and the supersession of alert observation by sprawling contemplation in the drawing classes where everything except draughtsmanship was taught.

Then began a series of high-falutin' lectures attended by the Civil Service and the Army; and these

were followed by crowded exhibitions where provincial Satraps and their sedulous feudatories indiscriminately scattered red seals among indifferent water colours which, under the merciful pall of pink and cobalt, aped the decadent Moghals, the degenerate Rajputs and the defunct Ajanta. To Jamini Roy's eyes, accustomed to European precision, the majority of those pictures must have seemed like the opium dream of an inept contortionist; and, enquire as he might, he could never discover what ear-rings of photographic authenticity had to do with the invisible ears of wraiths who patently transgressed the law of gravitation. He had been told that once a foolish crow had pecked at a bunch of painted grapes without slaking its real thirst; and he wondered why, in spite of foldless, though elaborately flowered, transparencies, the hour-glass figures, walking with human feet over decorative waves, moved him to loathing rather than to lust. But the material success of his elders and immediate contemporaries was too stupendous to let him continue in his disdainful isolation. After all, he also had deliberately chosen painting as his profession; and, since he had no patrimony to squander nor relatives to fall back upon, it was essential for him to sell his canvases which, when all was said and done, were till then no less imitative than the pictures he so despised.

It made no difference that the masters he was copying were not those whose lineage, like that of the Moghals and Rajputs, had become extinct. Nor did it matter that it was in modern European art that the oriental tradition was still alive and productive, still capable of inspiring work which, without blasphemy,

could be compared to the glories of the Renaissance. The important fact was that European art was not an isolated phenomenon, but the branch of an ancient tree which could not be transplanted into a foreign soil and still be made to yield nourishing fruits. For instance, oil colours, the chief medium of expression for a western painter, were never manufactured in India, and that precluded the possibility of our playing with them; working out of doors was impracticable for most of the year, due to the rigours of the Indian climate; our men and women were too colourlessly dressed to be realistically painted in their normal clothes. Then also our emotive stimuli were distinct; the rhythms of our life were not staccato enough to be translated into dashing brush-strokes; our houses were bare, the nature we knew inclement, individuals rendered almost impersonal through centuries of social and political repression. The riotous energy of the European was out of place in this atmosphere; to attempt to depict it was, at best, a form of play-acting; and no artist who took himself seriously could long find contentment in the role.

Unfortunately for every sincere man, the path between negative and positive knowledge is seldom as straight as logicians would have it; and, though Jamini Roy was, from the beginning, certain as to what did not constitute Indian art, it took him fifteen long years of anguish and privation to discover its enduring essence. But to start with there was the master whose methods he had been utilising in his commercial portraits; and, even if his fondness for Whistler should seem today to have been immature, that did not then

prevent the foreigner from teaching him that painting differed from illustration in proportion as it subordinated the occasional to the needs of composition, and that if poetry was written with words and not ideas then the sole constituents of a picture were lines and colour which had to form a coherent whole, irrespective of the demands of the model. One suspects, however, that the acrimony with which Whistler enunciated this principle, without having had the capacity to put it into frequent execution, had something to do with the apparent weakness of his drawing, an infirmity Jamini Roy never suffered from even in his nonage. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the distraction caused by petty details and local shadows had always appeared to him to be destructive of the final effect.

In any case, a man, beginning to consider colours as elements of design, was bound ultimately to forget their parentage and treat them not as vehicles of light but as so many slabs of a mosaic. In this attitude, had he known of Cézanne then, he might have found a kindred spirit; and, encouraged by the Frenchman's example, he could perhaps have discarded excessive plasticity sooner to attempt a wider harmony in which light received its due, and flesh and clothing, composing their material difference, became equally reflective at long last. But that was not yet to be. He had to complete the full circle and come back to his youthful medium, this time out of disinterested curiosity, free from the least thought of profit, before perceiving his accidental affinity with more than one recent European master. In the meantime, there was the

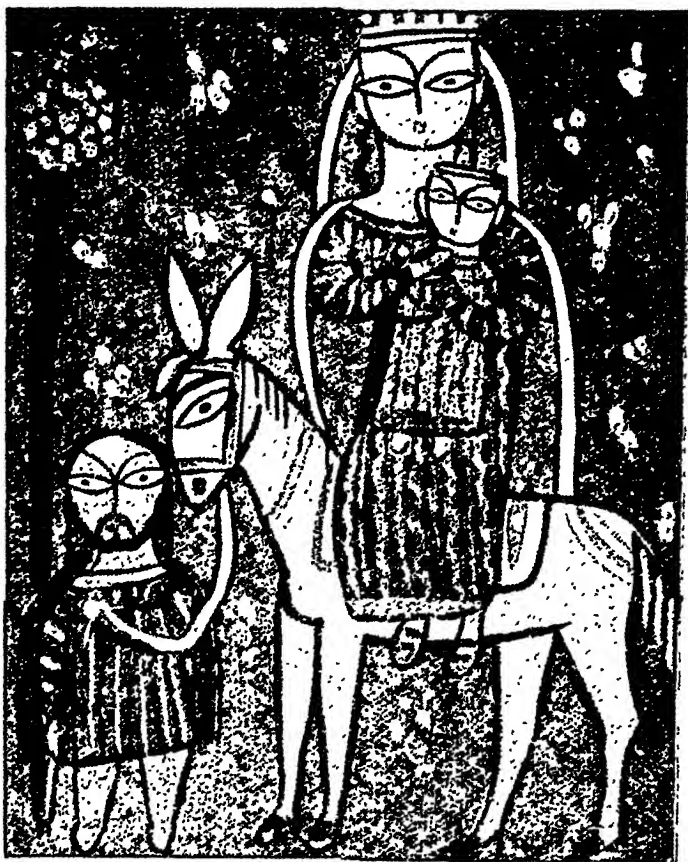
riddle of Indian art to ponder over, there was the problem of determining how far one could remain traditional, without falling into cliché and pastiche, and where independence turned into licence, denationalising, almost denaturing, as it were, the eccentric. After all, human inventiveness is just another fable; the main channels of man's activity were fixed in the paleolithic age; and the utmost originality permitted to a conscious individual consists perhaps in the rediscovery of a manner rejected in the remote past from a false sense of its limitations.

II

But I anticipate. For the moment, there were the mistakes of his contemporaries to be avoided, an honest attempt had to be made to see if the demands of the market could be met, without sacrificing firmness of drawing and accuracy of observation, without believing that bad perspective was good aesthetics and unreason the antithesis of ugliness. The public wanted sentiments. They could have it. But they should be taught that it was not a monopoly of dead emperors and legendary immortals. They would have to be warned that a picture was not a patchwork quilt of motley hues, but a tapestry of uniform materials, and that, while fidelity to local colour was a commendable virtue, it did not preclude unity of conception, accomplished through logical systematisation of flat tints to replace harmonious development of light. As to the subject matter, there was the vast, everyday world of the living

that lacked neither beauty and stateliness nor grace and feeling; and to one who had his eyes attuned to it, what could be more moving than a child learning its prayers from its mother, a peasant in his bamboo hat guiding the ox-drawn plough over flaming fields, an ebony girl leaning over the mirroring river to tuck a red flower in her glistening hair?

If the content of pictures could determine their race, here was Indian art of the veriest brand. In addition, the paintings revealed a painter, master of his medium, certain of his eyes, hands and mind, possessing a palette containing only red, blue, yellow, black and an occasional white, yet capable of producing effects undreamt of by the most prodigal colourist. The only criticism I have to offer on these pictures is that their author, though obviously a genius, is not, in spite of a fleeting resemblance, of the great line that produced Renoir who, like Raphael, could be sentimental without ceasing to be intellectual and even literary without surrendering pictorial values. The canvases of this period, notwithstanding their undoubted economy, were a trifle too picturesque to be judged by the highest standards; and one felt instinctively afraid that, unless the painter put greater rigidity into his contours and appealed less to our tactile desires in his treatment of skin and muscles, he would inevitably become the first president of the unborn local academy. These indoor studies of outdoor subjects, while being marvellously well organised, were somewhat deficient in actuality. They were not in the least illustrations; but they meant a great deal without signifying very much; and that separated them, once



Top : "Flight to Egypt"
tempera 9" × 11"

Bottom : "Elephant"
tempera 9" × 12"

JAMINI ROY



for all, from the real examples of Indian art, which, when they could not avoid history, turned it to mythology and treated the daily scene as a decorative motive, transcending space and time, transmuting human frailties into abstract forms.

What saved Jamini Roy from stagnating at this particular point was his sense of economy. Already, before entering this phase, he had recognised that exalted protagonists were no more necessary to painting than to tragedy, he had realised that profusion of prepared colours was a handicap and not an advantage; and now, under the tutelage of the Chinese, he was beginning to learn that distance could be conveyed without manipulation of the acute angle, and that foreshortening was not the only method of planting a figure solidly; one could even avoid modelling and yet give expression to a face. His palette was also reduced further, and predominance accorded to greys with rare touches of red to enliven a cheek or of black to vivify the hair and the border of sarees; and hence, from the point of view of colour at least, these later canvases fell into the same class as contains Corot's *Souvenir d' Italie* and the *Olympia* of Manet. It must, however, be emphasised again that there was no question of direct influence here, but another case of similar discoveries resulting from identical quests; and that, if anything, enhanced the resemblance between Manet and Jamini Roy who both, while capable of coping with minutiae, were generally bored by distracting details which they drastically simplified in order to achieve an abiding coherence.

Yet the artist was not satisfied. Indian art seemed

practically no modification, could be fitted on to the abstract figures he was now formulating. Thereafter his affinity with the "popular" artists of his country was never in doubt; and, if he still did not rest on his laurels, but marched on to conquer new territory, it was partly because he could not accept the Kalighat *pat* and the Bishnupur *pāta*, the two easily available samples of Bengali art, as instances of racial purity. The former seemed to him to bear the clear stamp of Europe, its stylised naturalism deriving patently from that source, while the latter, though of obvious local origin, had about it an air of tottering courts where pleasure more than order was the impulse behind design. However, of the two the Bishnupur tradition was more authentic; and this, with its frothy luxuriance strained off, gave him during the next few years the impetus to compose some of his most successful friezes, now mythological in subject, now factual in intention, partial to *gopinis*, but not exclusive of everyman.

Also colour returned in full glory—dark green and Indian red, golden yellow and mandarin blue, rich brown and ivory black, even dove grey and old rose, but never shading into one another, nor allowed to suggest the least likeness with the natural colours of the objective world. They were all applied uniformly, the very brush strokes being carefully obliterated, in order to destroy every suspicion, or perhaps shadow, of actuality; and thus indigo trees leaned against scarlet skies and green girls stood or sat in sculptural poses, offering white leaves and black flowers to absent gods; or the Blue Boy danced his cosmic dance in the two-dimensional alcove of his spaceless hut, the crimson of

his hands and feet complementing the spangled brown of the Himalayan cedar flattened against a dove grey wall. But it was not the unreality of the colours that made them so peculiarly Indian; it was their quality and combination, as well as the fact that, after having used oil and water colours for nearly two decades, Jamini Roy had suddenly discarded them in favour of tempera as a medium not only best suited to his special talent but also as the fittest to withstand the rigours of the Indian weather. Moreover, tempera was a local product and so cheap that wasteful play was permissible; and it could be put on canvas, cloth, paper or wood with equal effect and permanence.

attracted by the fame of the saint, had come all the way to Nawadwip to present him with a long devotional poem, found himself denied an audience. At last, after completely wearing out his shoes, he persuaded the chief disciple, Swarup Damodar, to give him a hearing. But no sooner had he recited the dedicatory quatrain than Swarup Damodar shocked the admiring assembly by exclaiming that the thing was as horrible as the excreta of the crow, since at the very outset the author had committed the unpardonable sin of comparing the prophet, who was, after all, a mere mortal, to Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, thereby transgressing the first law of æsthetics that proscribed confusion between the real and the unreal, between the natural and the supernatural.

The moral was obvious: our tradition did not forbid the entry of the objective world into art; it merely demanded that fact and fiction should present themselves separately and on their own merits. But who was to make the necessary distinction between them? Not surely the civilised adult who, through centuries of sophistication and seclusion from nature, had literally lost his senses; but the cave man who painted in Altamira, the African Negro who carves wood in New Guinea, the three-year-old child who sees the human form as two unequal ovoids with four radiating lines. Of course, such objectivity was unattainable by any modern man after perhaps his seventh year. Nevertheless, there were village artists even now living in the remoter districts of Bengal, who could still render their sense experience without artifice, who had not forgotten, as we had, that only

from a distance was the wholeness of an object visible and that distance flattened the sphere and reduced the cube to a plane. What was perceived at first was sheer form; and the content was gradually stuffed into the fragmented mould by the beholder, according to the means at his disposal. Every honest painter should, therefore, indicate, whenever possible, how much in a picture was his own property and to what extent he was indebted outside. This the uneducated artist did by making the man he respected bigger than the one he disliked, although he saw them both as nearly equal; and he was not being unfaithful to his eyes, if he did not, in changing the size, alter also the visible shape.

The alternative was to cultivate the near vision that transformed everything to a group of unorganised squares or surfaces; and, because Jamini Roy could not claim the same intimacy with things as could a cubist born in the heyday of European technology, he had to fall back upon the distant view which was no less logically authentic than the "short sight" of the present-day Westerner. For the modesty and the humility of the primitive painter was never illogical, as was evident when he was commissioned to depict a religious tale by some unlettered client and had to come to terms with a reality he firmly believed in but had no perceptual knowledge of. His approach to the problem was then instinctively similar to the traditional manner perfected by his urbane brethren under the patronage of enlightened princes, with this essential difference, however, that, while the sophisticated townsman had become sceptical enough to think that all reality was merely a system of conventions which could be so

changed and standardised as to connote the unnatural, the villager, through faith, was led to the conclusion that the supernormal was not less, but more, solid than the world of senses, a fact that necessitated an alteration in everyday values and made esoteric *mudras* superfluous by dwarfing trees and heightening heroes. Hence these illustrations were not just recondite experiments in ornamentation meant to amuse the discerning few, but strangely alive with perhaps the unconscious vitality of the whole race, using the word "unconscious" after Jung and not according to Freud; and that may be why they were better adapted to the incidents from the life of Rama than of Krishna whose eroticism was more suited to the classical treatment.

IV

Since Rousseau a desperate belief in the virtues of the primitive has been the abiding characteristic of the changeful romantic; and Jamini Roy, although never of that persuasion, in so far as it bases itself on self-indulgence and incapacity to take infinite pains, was yet too distrustful of the city where the traditional modes of Indian life were fast breaking out into complicated counterpoint, was, in fact, too much of a quietist to elude altogether the suspicion of being an escapist. But it was not the absence of contemporaneity in his pictures, nor their lack of syncopation, that caused such consternation or evoked such ridicule among his fellow painters during the first exhibition of his work in the above-mentioned *genre*. Till then, while seldom receiving their encouragement, he had

been usually courted by the organisers of public exhibitions, not only because his productivity was remarkable in the midst of universal sterility, but also because he had a manner which, they never quite knew why, had, without ever eliciting general approbation, always impressed a handful of enthusiasts. Anyhow, these were the men that counted. For, as I have already pointed out, the British had so upset our society that artists, finding themselves deprived of their corresponding public, had renounced their utilitarian function entirely and taken to copying exotic or outworn fashions in the hope that they would thereby appeal at least to the acquisitive instinct of a few monied collectors. At last the opportunity had arrived to be even with the snobs and at the same time do Jamini Roy down. It could now be safely maintained that he was no longer the best imitator of Western painting nor the surest practitioner of Indian art, but a plagiarist cribbing from actual peasants.

Most of this was certainly not in the conscious minds of his detractors; and, when one of his former teachers forgot himself to the extent of publicly remarking, in respect of a finely executed group of Sonthal boys playing with bows and arrows, that the drawing could be bettered by a half-witted child, he was, in all probability, genuinely scandalised, because, as his own work showed, he lacked the capacity to think cogently about art, was entirely ignorant of its history and had so lost touch with the country that he never knew where a living tradition was still to be found. Nevertheless, the fetish of ancestor worship had swelled his bank balance; and this palpable success

gave weight to his words, with the result that impartial, albeit incompetent, critics felt that they had done more than their duty to Jamini Roy by praising him as the ablest exponent of the *pat* technique and suggesting that he had abandoned it due to failing powers. Of course, he had abandoned that tradition; but he had done so in accordance with developmental laws implicit in the tradition itself, in order that its scope might be widened and a more complex life, non-existent when the tradition was established, could be brought within its range; and, had his judges understood the distinction between art and archaeology, they would have realised further that the importance of individual initiative was never overlooked in our tradition which considered music as the norm of all other arts, insisting thereby that the artist, while limited as to essential ingredients, was permitted, even compelled, to be original in regard to improvisation, so that new combinations of feelings could be formed within the framework of enduring emotions.

However that may be, after such display of general disapproval, it was no use appearing in public; and, though friends and sympathisers could yet be persuaded to visit the private exhibitions he periodically arranged in his cramped lodgings, money had become so scarce that the family wardrobe was frequently pillaged for dhotis and sarees to replace canvas, and evening meals systematically sacrificed to buy paint. Of course the new rich still wanted to see their progenitors perpetrated in vile portraits; and, as shreds of his former reputation persisted in clinging to him, they could perhaps be induced to commission him even now.

But he considered it dishonest to relieve them of their superfluous cash by display of a virtuosity in which he no longer believed; and, rather than do that, he retired within himself, subsisting on the barest of necessities and saving every scrap of paper he could lay his hands on, with a view to pressing it later into the service of the pictures he rarely sold to some charitable person. Meanwhile, he worked, and worked hard, to enlarge the scope of his new technique, not to take in, it is true, the industrialised city which he naturally abominated, but to grasp the material reality of India without the English.

For he could not deny the truth of the criticism that latterly his concern had been less with form than with formality; and, if thereby he had succeeded in becoming significant, he, at the same time, ran the danger of falling into meaninglessness. It was now imperative to cure the thinness of some of his recent work, and, while preserving its abstract appeal, to eliminate its abstruse character. In other words, this was no time for playing with dead conventions; he himself had to supply the context to his own isolation. Otherwise, he could not avoid the mistakes of his European fellow workers who, failing to recognise the difference between the formal and the private, expected their audience to solve the jig-saw puzzle to which they, due to their greater analytical powers, had reduced the world of appearance. A conglomeration of variously tinted shapes, presented in the flat, with a hint of the third dimension in the background, could not, however, be reconstituted into a human figure, unless one was such a specialist in painting as to see only coloured

surfaces in whatever direction one happened to look. For the rest of us, objects were the repositories of colour, as well as of mental associations, some of which, through similarity of conditioning, had become universal enough to be considered objective; and their absence, therefore, from visual experience was surely a personal peculiarity that had to be suppressed; else an inverted subjectivism was bound to result.

Besides, recognisability was no enemy of form, but something that conferred universality on the particular, in so far as it was known to be itself by everyone who could distinguish it from its unrecognisable fellows; and the essence of this recognisability, at least in regard to human beings, did not reside in the individual's shape, size or colour, all of which depend on the distance that separated him from the observer, nor even in his facial features and expression which similarly were changeable and remained invisible from afar, but was to be sought in his gestures which, once discerned, brought instant recognition. Of course, they, along with movement, were also deceptive, as they lent themselves to frequent malobservation and, in consequence, ended by setting up false identity. Nonetheless, unlike colour and size, they could always be considered in isolation, being unaffected, except as to their origin, by the environment wherein they occurred. Thus, for the painter, who was denied continuity of description, gestures tended to equate themselves, if not with the form of the individual, at least with the type to which he belonged; and, since Jamini Roy's present problem was to make concrete the generalities that constitute an event rather than the

metaphorical presentation of some Crocean experience that is immutably self-expressed the moment it comes into existence, he occupied himself during the next couple of years with pictures that, avoiding all reportage, were still convincingly factual. This he seemingly accomplished by marrying expressionism to naturalism, with post-impressionism acting as the match-maker. For, to do it, he had seldom to modify the typical contour to suit an actual face; and yet he succeeded in portraying the age and profession, the class and religion of the figures, not so much by means of unambiguous symbols, as by way of characteristic poses, delineated with an eye to intricate rhythmical pattern.

V

These figure paintings of triadic widows counting the rosary, of quintuplicate *bauls* playing the one-stringed zither, of concordant crowds celebrating a feast, of Mussalmans praying and women going to temples, of mothers with children and partiarchs in their grandeur, seemed to mirror a Bengal that even the British had not been able to destroy; and, in addition, they revealed an artist who had almost purged himself of the pleasure impulse, so austere were their curves, so unostentatious their blues, yellows and purples. Yet they were uneconomical in a queer sort of way; they gave an impression of profusion that the artist had never quite intended; and, while gestures were supreme, all expression had not been transmuted into them; they lingered here and there, distracting

infinitely more precise than that of a man who, having innumerable aspects, could seldom be fixed in contemplation; and that is perhaps why these pictures of Jamini Roy, without making the least concession to anything non-pictorial, are so poignantly dramatic, so rich in humanity and full of such insight into character.

At the same time, he was developing a new technique of portraiture. As a matter of fact, even when most obsessed by the purely formal relation between the line and the volume, he had not entirely abandoned the representational method. But he had, perhaps mistakenly, believed that, far from surpassing, he could never go anywhere near the European masters in their particular excellence. So he had always considered his realistic work as exercises that laid the foundation for the ultimate abstraction. That this estimate erred on the side of modesty was evident in almost every such canvas he cared to exhibit; and it made no difference whether the subject depicted was two provincial matrons in their Sunday best going to church during a sleepy forenoon or an aboriginal woman fondling her upsurging baby under the opalescent sky of autumn, the dexterity of the drawing, the sureness of the colour perspective, the mastery shown in rendering space and air were the marks of a born painter who would be distinguished in any country. In addition, they revealed an economy and sense of composition that were all Jamini Roy's own.

All this notwithstanding, they were not portraits in any sense of the word; and it remained to be seen if such sparseness of details could still achieve likeness. There is no doubt at all that it could; and his study of

of a middle-aged Bengali woman, done in umber, white and black on an orange and olive background, recreated living similitude by a simple extension of what he learnt long ago from the Chinese. For here too he eschewed shading or gradation of colours and rendered the difference between planes by abrupt changes in pigment, without impairing tonality, however; and as he never, not even in his most abstract designs, hesitated to exploit the suggestibility of his audience, so, without in the least modifying pictorial qualities, he invested one of his sitters with paranoiac character by a rigidity of the blue-coated shoulders, reminiscent alike of Mussolini and Modigliani. But successful as these portraits were, the most interesting was a black head on a yellow background, where anatomy and design reached such fusion that representational values no longer militated against pattern which could be almost cubistic and yet make room for the psychological insight of the artist.

Of course, this concern with the volumetric shapes did not mark a new departure in Jamini Roy's attitude; and, as I have pointed out before, even during his most linear phase, he considered the contour to be the boundary of formal surfaces. However, till quite recently, his approach to these surfaces was external, the eye travelling from the periphery inwards to the main features, like the nose and the mouth; and where such arresting impediments were absent, as in the male torso, he tended to glide on to the outer edge again, without impairing, it is true, the typical characteristics of the subject, but failing, all the same, to do full justice to its character. Now suddenly, because perhaps

of the exigencies of portraiture, he found this treatment insufficient; and he set himself to build up figures from within, gradually working outwards through the interrelation of innumerable small masses. Besides, his control over the line had, in the meantime, become so sure that he could no longer feel creative when handling this mechanical medium; and, unless he gave up painting altogether or considered it simply as a source of financial gain,—for, by this time, he was making a slight profit on all the exhibitions, which he held at least twice a year,—he had to undertake fresh experiments. These resulted in the three monumental studies entitled respectively “A Peasant”, “A Baul” and “Prayer”, where even gestures were deemed superfluous, a mere rearrangement of the lumps and surfaces of the human body being sufficient for the purpose of fixing the type of the figures and conferring dramatic intensity on them.

VI

In other words, Jamini Roy has never been a slave of any one style; and, however much he might have wanted to paint in the manner of his ancestors, the very fact of this desire having been a conscious one has tended to isolate him from them. For, while they sought just to express themselves in the fashion most natural to them or nearest at hand, his real problem has been to find a technique which in its stark veracity abjured communication altogether and depended increasingly on communion needing no mediation of make-belief. In other words, there have been moments in Jamini Roy's



"Dancers"

Tempera 34" x 15"

career when he has seemed to turn away from painting and almost become a mere experimenter; and, even in his most imitative mood, he has been no more of a copyist than was Manet in harking back to Titian's *Venus* for the motif of his *Olympia*. In the circumstances, it would be absurd to think of him as the last of our "popular" artists; and although my admiration for them compels me to compare them with Matisse whom they resemble in the purity of their artistic impulse, yet it is Picasso in whom the same purity is further refined by intellect, who, among the present day artists, is most like Jamini Roy.

At any rate, the experimental urge is equally strong in Jamini Roy; and he also takes up a subject and then paints version after version, breaking, distorting and reforming the theme, repeating, as it were, in a few months a whole historical process of long duration. All the same, it would do no one any good to pursue the kinship farther; and, if it be true that criticism defeats its purpose unless it sets up a host of false analogies, I would invert Mr. T. S. Eliot's famous statement to assert that, because I consider Jamini Roy to be a great painter, he reminds me of many fore-runners whom it would take too long to list. But his affinity with Rouault is clear; he is frequently reminiscent of Derain; and in the way he has latterly handled brush and oil colours, as well as in the type of the male face that has most attracted him, he is somewhat like Van Gogh whose vision, on the contrary, was qualitatively different. Nonetheless, these are fortuitous resemblances, resulting from the similarity of cause rather than of effect; and not only has Jamini

Roy lived all his life in a city where few specimens of contemporary European art have found their way, but his ignorance of every European language is too colossal to have permitted him to acquire even a nodding acquaintance with any aesthetic theory now current in the West.

demonstrations of organised labour should present him with fewer formal difficulties than the excesses of a *kirtan* procession.

Again, development is not an indispensable qualification for an artist. Especially in classical times, great painters have maintained an even excellence throughout lengthy lives; and, if, despite all his traditionalism, Jamini Roy is impelled by the urge of perfection to pass from phase to phase, it must be because he possesses less equanimity than his choice of subjects gives us to believe. Of course, to conquer one's spiritual restlessness is the aim of every discipline; but to act calmly while feeling disturbed is the sure sign of dangerous repression, even of subconscious dishonesty. After all, the turmoil of our cities is by now as firmly rooted in our soil as the stillness of our plains and the majesty of our hills; and, since Jamini Roy's one ambition in life has been to lose himself in the identity of his people, he must not turn away from them when they are on their predestined way. Of all men I can think of, he is the best fitted to become their representative and give shape to their aspirations; and I am sure that, could he but complete his work, he would not fail them. As it is, he is the most satisfying artist I have ever known; we look back on the same past and are confronted by the same future.

H. M. CHAMPNESS

PRELUDE IN PALESTINE

The Vienna café in Jerusalem lived up to its name. There were no tourists, no priests and not unnaturally no Arabs; nor—as so often elsewhere—did one sit in apprehension of numerous and vaguely devotional Americans. This was the place for the recent Jewish expatriates to work off their nostalgia, a fact which saved it from the banality of most exported beer-halls. Zion was out of the picture, and a painstaking *gemütlichkeit* was in. Strauss stood well with the patrons, though the haggard Ukrainian at the piano now and then preferred to release his ardour in Chopin or Rachmaninov, for whose preludes he accepted small change. Lager flowed, *frankfurter* sausages were at a premium, and there was even a species of *sauerkraut*. Yet one could not escape a certain tension. To a stranger it was doubly strange for all its appearance of familiarity—there was an element of desperation in this determined effort to forget what had happened. One remembered the wrong things, even the incidents of the voyage out that might seem unrelated, for fever had spread far beyond Palestine in 1937. It was all of a piece—mines, reports off Gibraltar, the crew of a Spanish tanker lapped in flaming oil as they drowned at a time when Franco was innocent of submarines, the snooping Italian air and sea patrols, the expression on the face of little Dr. Grein towards closing time. Someone said it was time to go. The Ukrainian

stopped playing and wiped his pale exalted face. Grein shrugged, paused in embarrassment and suggested one for the road. Spiridon, his neighbour, slapped him one on the shoulder, laughing. Spiridon was a Greek electrical engineer who had done well in Chicago. He was tough. Afterwards he whispered—Arabs are after him. He won't go home alone at night—never, no place. He lost the habit in Munich, and won't pick it up here. The poor guy thought it would be different here. So we had more Strauss and lager until the bar closed, though some of us reflected that a *bierkeller* in blinding, tortured Palestine was hardly the perfect answer. Englishmen, when sober, are a little glum as they pile into cars after public festivity, but these people looked fixed and intense. They stalked out, watching the Arabs crouched over a nearby radio tuned in to Bari for the propaganda, and Zion came back again as they said goodnight in Hebrew and made off in groups.

Outside, a New Yorker said—You might like the farm colonies. I don't, but you might. It gives me a pain to see all those college professors playing around like a bunch of hicks. Kinda wasteful. Fix it with the Jewish Agency.

The fixing was quick and efficient, but again the tension was there. Our Armenian took us to the Agency, speaking fluent Hebrew, and upstairs to an office door. Here he was pointedly excluded.

Don't take that man near our colonies—the official said. They'd kick him out. He was an Arab agent last year.

Taxed with this at lunch time, the Armenian

wept with indignation. He said he'd helped run truckloads of evacuees from Jaffa when the shooting started. Bastards!—he stammered. Never again!

A small Greek waiter approached, and somehow became included in the conversation. He was one of the countless Levantines who thread their way in and out of alien societies from California to the coast ports of Madagascar, trusting nobody and fending unobtrusively for themselves. A few are smug and successful, some, like Spiridon, have abandoned feeling under pressure of their own toughness, but many betray the bitter despairing loneliness of the involuntary wanderer. Michael one of these. Without Zionist Executive or Moslem Supreme Council to spur him to frantic idealism or back him in distress, without hope except to save his body from destitution and violence, he put one in mind of the sailor's epitaph on Cape Sunion. Life, he said, was bad enough in the valley of Eurotas when the Turks had done with it, and worse elsewhere. In ten minutes, his bills and dishes abandoned, he was back in the hideous memories of an ambush, sobbing without restraint. We could not find out what had happened except that several passenger lorries were raked by rifle fire and one or two burnt out on a cratered road. Michael did not know who or what had saved him. For him the rest was swallowed up in his own terror and misery. He was logical, and could not see what else, amid flames and bullets, a man might feel. He was frank, and admitted his nerve was gone, probably for good. A humble, amiable soul and a natural individualist, to him fanatical mass-action was meaningless and horrible. Yet he felt that terror and misery,

though normal, were not enough. But what could one do, what was the proper reaction? He looked keenly at us, as though our faces could tell him. Thinking, he composed himself. We waited.

—You English!—he suddenly exclaimed. (Will the English ever understand the meaning of this all-too-familiar apostrophe?) And then, driven by an emotion he did not understand, he rapped out another anecdote. The end was extraordinarily incisive—how he did it with his limited English would be hard to say. He depicted an English girl, a cool *soignée* young thing and to him, it seemed, an unknowable goddess, sitting alone in the hot bare bedroom of an Arab house in Nablus after car and lover had gone up on a landmine, polishing her nails. He could make no comment, and stood pondering his own story. Was it only weak eyes that wept for another's misfortunes? The girl's behaviour was Homeric, not to be ascribed to mortals, for whom, clearly, it would not do. Certainly not in Palestine, except perhaps for the astounding English. Repenting his candour and intimacy, Michael served drinks with a kind of angry despair.

We heard much of the decline in religious fanaticism, and found, Gibbonian decline being out of fashion, that the slick word tended more than usual to obscure the meaning of what had passed. In spite of Catholic enterprise and the momentarily overwhelming piety of American capital it was truest, if true at all, of Christianity. In the good old days, it was said, the Turkish guards had their work cut out to keep bloodshed in the Holy Sepulchre within what a broad-minded Ottoman administration judged to be decent

limits, for the sanction for the impulse to set about one's neighbour was religious and not political. One would knife him for untimely genuflections, uncanonical Signs of the Cross, or chants that burst forth when one's established liturgy enjoined silence—not for being a Croat or a Pole, not even primarily for being an Armenian. The ensuing spate of correspondence between Ballplatz and Vatican, the hurried conference of ambassadors in a palace by the Bosphorus, the shaggy and verminous armies of the Tsar rolling ponderously (in spite of plague and their transport service) towards the Danube—these were an afterthought. Even the Russian penetration of the fifties and sixties wore Orthodox dress, with great barnlike monasteries rising on Mount Athos, and Jerusalem teeming with smart droshkies and eccentric hostesses from Petersburg. All this was gone. Nobody now appeared to make much political capital out of the Christian sects. One saw no guards to speak of, and the priests were no longer heroes of asceticism and devotion, or even zealots. They were more like guides or Sunday school teachers, and addicted to unseasonable and furtive smoking. Pedestrian souls, they did not live up convincingly to the legend of turbulence and depravity prescribed by tradition for those who live in the shade of great shrines, though they did include notable freaks. (There was one huge bearded creature, every inch the Byzantine patriarch, who wandered round picking on devotionally-minded victims and bawling out—H'are ya? How's everything? How's the folks? I'm from Salt Lake City!—And the Mount of Olives was graced by a slight aromatic figure

with a flamboyant beard, an embodied mannerism from El Greco, who spoke a deprecating BBC and owned to Oxford.) The hereditary Arab doorkeepers of the Sepulchre, who seem never to walk and seldom to wake up except to take tips or sell candles, would once, if the rules had held, have attained to sainthood *via* massacre or ended up on the labour market instead of surviving undramatically, somnolent and reasonably secure. In the Grotto of the Nativity the lamps maintained by the various churches, their respective numbers defined in a concordat whose signatories once guarded their rights with fanatically jealous care, were distressingly flyblown affairs, and those of the Orthodox were chronically short of oil. (This, one feels, was a little remiss of the Iraq Petroleum Company. However, they did better at Nazareth with good four-gallon tins for the lilies of the Annunciation.) The nail that fell from the woodwork of the Manger, claimed by the Greeks and purloined, they said, by the Latins for insertion in their own corner, had proved amenable to the ruling of a British High Commissioner, and a dispute which might formerly have caused major troop movements had peacefully lapsed. Contentions of rite had lost their fine frenzy, and the frenzy had duly struck root elsewhere. In the labyrinthine silver-chased recesses of the Sepulchre, where age was more poignantly present in age-long accumulation of relic and figuration than it can ever be in the direct antiquity of such things as a Doric architrave or a Roman colonnade, the effect was infinitely evocative, but not of strife. Rather of an immense but long-past upheaval whose elements, covering all that a procession of centuries had

felt and believed and consecrated, had come to rest in a perpetual afternoon. The date and style of the last touches aroused associations of Victorian piety, as though the quietus had come soon after General Gordon, investing with an incongruous primness the wilder memories of carnage and exaltation, and assigning the afternoon to the calendar of the early nineties. Flames are out of place on such afternoons, and stillness is propitious to things on the brink of dissolution. The whole aspect of the Holy Places most strongly suggests that the survival of the strange unnameable quality, peculiar in all the world to the Christian fragment of Jerusalem and even now unaccountably answering to the name of holiness, must now vanish or lie quite still. For the first time in history, what were once the supreme and all-justifying springs of violence are spent here, and a trance-like religious peace has supervened. Now the suggestion is of something hypnotically powerful and awe-inspiring, but perhaps for that reason withdrawn or withdrawing from humanity. The flies darting in and out of the incense under the cupola, the tall unwavering tapers, the fingers of saints mouldering delicately in gloves of damascened silver, the great company of gnarled wrapt ikon-faces shrinking back from their jewels and silver into the darkness, the multitudinous intricacy of ceremonial resting in its turn on huge dimly-remembered structures of theology and dogma, the fixity of interweaving calendars, the automatism of hieratic gesture and chant—they mark the edge of a tremendous but slowly receding thing. Here all human beings have the air of increasingly distant spectators, whether they celebrate or kneel passively

or stand or creep about, and one has a sense of the wide and widening gap between the guardians and the thing guarded. There could hardly be a more illuminating contrast to the savage topicality of the main issue than these magnificent embers of the age of faith.

The gap was less conspicuous among the Arabs, particularly in the precincts of the Dome of the Rock. Here, in the stern exclusion of Jews and the rigorously curtailed admission of Christians (at twenty piastres a head), there was some excuse for scenting militant Islam instead of plain Arab nationalism—unless one remembered that all moneys went to the Moslem Supreme Council, whose funds, immune from public audit, were universally believed to be devoted, rightly or wrongly, to sedition and gun-running. Also the feud of the Husseini and Nashashibi families, whose contest for leadership rang Koranically through cafés and editorials, seemed a little too classical to fit the new cause. But here again, it appeared, Islam as a subject for ardour appealed less to the Moslem traditionalist than Arabism to the modern Arab. Apart from the Wailing Wall, which one cannot include, there was no talk of religious riots, whereas the current price for anti-Jewish trouble, including an excellent cut for the agent, was quoted at sixty pounds per thousand demonstrators. This pastime, which afforded a welcome and modestly profitable change from their previous role in public dissensions, was open to Christian Arabs, and very popular it was said to be. Its most fervent apologist was a young man who, between gulps of *raqui*, declaimed Auden's *Spain*—loudly and with uncomprehending relish.—'But for us, the struggle'—He loved

that line. He was a Christian schoolmaster. It was easy enough to foresee the time when the Haram es Sherif would be defended by rifle fire against a search for arms by British troops. Often the fanatic had both emotions behind him, religion and patriotism. There was more than a touch of the ghazi about one gunman we met in Tiberias—at the time, he earned good money driving a taxi. Quite a thug—said a British constable who had shared the coffee.—Had to put him inside last year.—The two had great respect for each other. When he had gone, the gunman said his piece. At first he stuck to tactics, explaining his role in the decoy-gang that went in close to the road block to provoke the enemy to a premature deployment, and dilating on the relative dangers of fighting troops and police. He much preferred the former, he said: the latter knew the game so well that you had to pull out in good time. He mentioned the Parabellum, a machine-pistol he much admired, and said something about explosives. And then he said that whenever things got really dangerous he saw a great green bird hovering low above him, and knew that it signified paradise, and that paradise was desirable and near. This kind of talk was less common among the educated. If they said Islam they gave the word a narrow stridency that belonged to Europe, and damped down its connotations of reverence and spacious internationalism. Fawzi Kaukji, the guerilla whose illegal portraits the police might prudently ignore—or, if they were literal about orders, tear down at the risk of their lives—was the Arab Garibaldi. They were at pains to point out the likeness, and to make it clear that the man was neither

tribal bandit nor dervish prophet, but the expert servant of a purely political cause. Their efforts were vehemently seconded by Sheikh Khatib el Arslan from the microphones of Italy.

Among Jews, the towering eminence of Zionism made it hard to measure the religious ingredient. Probably it was strongest where most harmless—among the small traditional communities of the Old City, fragments of the Diaspora that came back with the Sultans, speaking Yiddish and Spaniolit and sometimes Yemenite Arabic. These have little but the Law to hold them together—Zionists often say that like the Bokhara colony or the Fallashas of Abyssinia they have broken away from the national tradition and will never return. Certainly they combine to a rare degree the attributes of aloofness and abjection, and conform in appearance to the most impossible canons of Romanticist romance. To the despair of Zionist progressives and the delight of sightseers they still wear caftans and forelocks; if they have money they do not show it, and some have hats that commemorate the crown of thorns. Their gait is bowed and hesitant, and their scourged, chalk-white faces have the blankness that comes out on the other side of suffering. It is a shock to see them speak or go shopping. There had been hopes of the eastern Jews as mediators between Zion and Arabism. These at least are too few and too apathetic for power-politics, and too secretive for clamorous gossip. They have their synagogues, they cling tenaciously to the Wailing Wall, their dreams in a sense are pre-political and their whole spectral existence is of the order of waiting. The Messiah? The constable sitting in the

booth by the Wall with a telephone at his elbow and a .45 revolver on his lap need not look to them to start trouble, unless they are pledged to some despairing act of revenge. A legend says that when the Army of Golden Spears came out of Persia to sack the city and take the True Cross away, the Jews bought up eighty thousand of their late oppressors and massacred all. They have had no second chance in thirteen centuries.

After all this fantasy and mediaevalism, the Zionist approach is certainly modern enough. This may be an accident. A wise Jew told us—We may appear as iconoclasts, but we don't mean it. We haven't come here to fight, far from it, but look at Europe, and by Europe I don't just mean Germany. What's happening to our people there is enough to justify urgency, isn't it? I'd say ruthlessness if I hadn't seen what ruthlessness really means. And urgency, we know, sometimes leads to crudity. We just daren't let the Arabs or the British think we don't mean business. People preach to us of tact and patience, but tact and patience need time—more time than we have. Unless we've got going here before Europe finally caves in on us, the Judaism we've sworn at all costs to save and to perpetuate will be finished, and finished for good. We won't look for trouble, but for us, this time, there can be no climbing down, and we know it—This man had hopes of a settlement with the Arabs, but inevitably some Jews, mainly young, were less wise, and the followers of Vladimir Jabotinsky had more than a trace of fascism. And some of the wise were less optimistic. They quoted Stresemann.—If you had given me one concession, I could have saved

this generation for peace. That you have not done so, is my tragedy and your crime—Unfair perhaps, but a sign of rising desperation.

One's first thought on seeing a Jewish farm colony is that Palestine is one of the very few places where such a thing could exist without previous revolution. One's second, that revolution, or something like it, may belong in the future instead of the past. (The words imply no guilt—only the possibility of disaster.) One's third, that it would be hard to find such a brilliant and full-blooded agricultural community anywhere in the world. This can be confirmed in detail. The colony of Mishima Haemek was a good example. As a work of civilization it was so good that had it been much better it would have been far too good to be true. (That, unfortunately, was just how it had struck the Arabs, who had duly delivered a night attack and fired thirty thousand trees the year before. Their failure to do more damage was due to their own poor discipline and a certain minimum of Jewish defensive fire. They retired with casualties.) The cultivated land, some three thousand acres of rich green, vivid against a pale sterility, stretched west up a low hillside and east across a valley just south of Mount Carmel. The pines on the hillside came under a Polish forestry expert and the soil under a German agronomist, and both flourished. They were an object-lesson to all—and they are legion—who say the Jews are no good with their hands. Crops were said to be excellent. Some Arabs from a nearby village accepted with dignified thanks a gift of three camel-loads of seed-corn, cynically observing that their own landlord did nothing for them.

They said he never came near them except to collect his rent, with which he proceeded to buy whores from Paris. Two of these, amid general applause, had just walked out on him. A model dairy was just getting under way. In matters of food and housing the children and the older people received priority, the workers of both sexes sleeping in huts and eating rough in a communal dining-hall. The same went for washing, except that there were two wash-houses and not one, as at some other colonies. The new crèche school was admirably equipped, and easily defensible, in the absence of enemy artillery, by a single machine-gun mounted on the roof. The children were under expert care, rather than that of their parents, who might visit the crèche in the evenings after knocking off. There was a sports ground, well patronised, and a project for a swimming-pool. In the rest-room a fine pianist wearing a singlet was often to be heard playing classics to any who cared to listen, including Arabs. Culture could claim one serious composer, several musicians, two novelists, a sculptor and a specialist in portraiture—this out of some two hundred adults. There were ex-professors driving tractors, and a substantial minority of graduates in the fields. Within the limits imposed by severe working conditions, the social atmosphere was lively and enterprising. Sex was a fore-taste of Shangri-La—on showing us our bedroom our host politely regretted that no girls were sleeping there, the best being off at a conference anyway. Should two of one sex compete for one of the other, courtesy was the rule, and we learnt with some astonishment that this remarkable species of courtesy, apparently unaided,

had kept the peace of love for more than ten years. In any case, the controlled, collectivised rigour of the life was uncongenial to perfumed eroticism. No one ever wore anything but working clothes and a girl said she had seen no make-up since the Coronation. As for marriage, one just fixed it with the secretary and moved in. Such was the discipline of consent that there seemed no tangible grounds for misbehaviour of any kind. Plant was modern and well-tended. Marketing was centralised higher up, and hence assured. Building and layout showed neatness and foresight. There were plans for rapid expansion dependent only on Arab willingness to sell land, if necessary at record prices. There was political coherence, many colonies being affiliated to a sort of labour party called the Hashomir Hazair. There was no synagogue and no drink. A few more years of work of this quality and one foresaw a change in many desolate malarial swamp-valleys, and a chance in many lives. The thing was brilliantly and formidably efficient. That was the trouble.

We asked a young Polish Jew about last year's raid. He looked husky, had served his conscription time with the gunners, and had been thrown out of a Warsaw engineering school for socking Aryans at a demonstration.

—Did you have a gun at the time?—

—Yes.—

—Did you fire?—

—Yes.—

—Did you hit any one?—

—Don't know. Can't remember. Don't think so—

—Did you try to hit any one?—

—No. Why should I? None of us tried much. We just wanted to drive them off. We knew they only attacked because of cash and incitement from agitators. We can get along with Arabs O.K.—

This was enlightenment with a vengeance. Nobody but a maniac would suppose that all, or even a majority, of a people so placed could live up to such a standard. The tragedy was that in one way it hardly mattered whether they did or not. In one way it made little difference whether they sent their best doctor out to tend Arab wounded, only as at Ain Harod to see him shot, or whether they took to Revisionism and gunning. All that was finest in Zion, its devotion, its passionate idealism, above all its single-mindedness, could only enhance its menace in Arab eyes. Thanks to these it was a success, and hence a threat and a challenge. Even its pacifism, where not worn thin, lent a touch of scientific inhumanity to an already sinister strength. The Arabs saw, or thought they saw, a splendidly co-ordinated array of forces—finance, technology, culture, propaganda, organisation, everything that had given the earth to Europe—devoted to an object which, whatever the Jews professed, with whatever sincerity, meant the end of all they understood by an Arab Palestine. (Possibly the end of much more. Where would they stop, these Jews whom Europe had excreted, and who professed their ability to make a garden from the Mediterranean coast to the borders of India? Who would think twice when everything was threatened, from the plots of the *fellahin* to the Pan-Islamic visions of Cairo and Damascus?) Without violence they stood no more chance than an army corps

of half-trained, half-staffed, illiterate peasant infantry against a veteran panzer division. With violence, however, there was still a chance. And while that chance lasts, the Arabs will take it.

Intent on their enterprise, the Jews could at times forget what enveloped them, but never for long. Every week or so two British mounted police patrols met at Mishma Haemek to take high tea and check each other's data. They sat at a bare trestle table, one patrol on each side, and any one was free to join them. As the guests of men and women familiar with these things they talked, not as thugs or sadists, but as members of a small internally-loyal group whose main defence against alien violence lay in the power to retaliate in kind. The act of retaliation being collective, it bears lightly on the individual conscience, and the weaker the law of the land, the more it approximates to a duty. It figured in Palestine because it has always figured in war. One man gave an instance, citing the following details :—

Crime : Four police on main road patrol in NE Palestine. Ambushed at road block. All police killed, truck burnt out, Lewis gun, rifles, ammunition and kit all looted. No mutilation.

Punishment : Police visit to village believed to have harboured culprits after ambush. Eight killed, twenty-six seriously injured, two houses blown up. No trace of culprits or loot.

The man had taken part in the visit and was sure of his facts. If any thing he was pro-Arab. Such incidents had of course been common in Eur for

years. In Palestine, controlled by armed forces as civilized and conscientious as any in the world, this must count as an extreme case, but it showed how few of the tragic elements were lacking, and how those elements reacted on normal self-respecting men.

The same evening the Polish Jew said—Don't fire at us the question, what is a Jew? Race-biology is nonsense. The Hebrew we speak here has been artificially revived. Few of us young ones are religious. Nationalism is dangerous. We faced it in Europe and we're facing it here. Don't tie us down to nationalism. If only we felt less threatened we could do great things. If only we could ease this tension we could take the first step beyond nationalism. We have what we need for that. We could even do it, with luck, without raising a Red scandal among the big shots in Europe. Soon, with our knowledge of pain and healing, we could make sense of life here. Then we could live.—

The war in Spain went on. Spanish and European, its carnage progressed amid a vast and bewildering riot of intellectual and emotional pageantry. The staff officers reporting on air cover and tank formations, the glamour-girls on the hill above Behobie watching the last of Irun until the bars were open in Biarritz, joined with Malraux and Hemingway and Auden and Picasso to focus everything and everywhere and always on this and here and now. Palestine was different. Its life conformed relentlessly to harsh sunlight and arid, glistening hills. It was timeless, and hostile to mellow-ness and maturity and sophistication. It was stark and unpropitious to compromise. It was rich in nothing but blinding revelations and bare bones. It answered

to nothing but the passion that had brought Utopia to the agonising verge of actuality and the smack of bullets on rock. For long it had been what Europe was fast becoming.

M. H. M. BEAN

THE SPRING WHOSE DROPS ARE PEARLS

When the Maharaja journeyed from his capital to his winter resort, he took the old route that had served Tibetan merchants for hundreds of years. When he was feeling fresh he rode and those of his court, who were not too portly from years of good feeding, rode too. When he was tired, he was carried in a dandy. His train stretched for nearly half a mile. First came the mules, with bells round their necks which tinkled louder than the mountain streams—streams which gushed from the dank undergrowth and made a patch of mud here and there, where the mules slithered and brushed their burdens against the rock,

but which were welcome when the sun burnt fiercely and the trees were withered from lack of rain;—the mules' burdens were boxes and iron-bound chests and silver vessels; and Persian carpets, striped *dhurries*, scarlet *resais*, sheepskins and furs; all the household goods, all the silks of the ladies, and the finely chased water pots and dishes; and countless things besides. After the mules the Maharaja rode, with his general, his aides-de-camp and those ministers who knew how to sit a horse.

The ladies came next, in yellow, scarlet and gold. Some of them had small Nepalese features, ivory skins and slant eyes; some were Indian ladies of high rank; their eyes black with *kohl*. Persian beauties, unused to the eyes of strange men, drew their striped veils across their faces when the villagers came to stare. Old or ugly, they were all perfumed and jewelled, and the richness of their silks varied according to their rank. Behind the ladies were carried those ministers and clerks whose thin knees had never gripped a horse; and then came the train of followers—servants and coolies; and villagers, who came with the hope of a handful of rice after the evening meal, or with long-winded petitions and complaints—or just to see and stare.

It was on the second day of one such journey that the Maharaja passed near Tapa's home; and Tapa and his father left the stick-and-thatch hut early, before the sun had reached their valley, and went up through the rice fields and the cornfields and the forest that clung to the rocks; up the well-worn path to wait at the shrine where the village meetings were held.

Thirty men were there; poor men dressed, like Tapa's father, in rags of cloth. The richest of them wore sandals made of grass and had a whole sleeve to his shirt. Tapa and his father had neither shirt nor sandals; only a belt of grasses to tie the rags round their bodies; and little greasy caps. They shivered with cold, for none of them had fed since sunset of the day before. Gathering wood, fishing, herding cattle, breaking stones for the road—all these must be left, for to-day they were bound to give their services to the Maharaja as he passed through their district. Perhaps at the end of the day there would be small coins thrown into the dust, and sweets and spiced rice. So they waited and thought of the good things to come; and Tapa ran down the road and stood under the big pine tree from which the traveller has his first and last glimpse of dazzling snow. The sun was creeping up the valleys, lighting the strips of young corn, like green lamps scattered here and there. A boy passed, a rich landowner's son, his hair hanging in a thick plait down his back, and wearing a long coat buttoned to the chin. He hardly looked at Tapa. Other travellers came—poor people, hastening to reach the little town before the dark should overtake them, and the bears and panthers steal from the forest to drink at the springs. Some of the people who passed were Tibetans, their black hair sticking out in a fringe from below their sheepskin caps; the women laden with nose-rings and ear-rings. They were unwashed and smelt strongly, but this Tapa didn't notice. And at last, not long before noon, he saw the Maharaja's train winding round the further hillside, and signalled

to the men who crouched, spitting and chatting and chewing *pan*.

When the cavalcade arrived the coolies who, since early morning, had borne the dandies on their shoulders, now gave place to Tapa's father and the men of his valley. Tapa and other boys carried bundles for the palace servants, for which labour they might get a few pice.

At first Tapa ran along eagerly, working his way to the front of the coolies and servants so as to get a glimpse of those who rode in the dandies; and when he was roughly ordered back upon one side, he made his way up on the other until he had walked three times as far as any one else; and then he felt footsore and tired, and lagged behind. Now the train disappeared round a corner, and Tapa hastened to keep it in view; but at every corner he rounded he saw the last of the coolies disappear round the corner ahead. He slackened his pace, picking his way carefully in the hot dust between the stones, for he knew they would stop at the spring to drink and bathe their faces, and he would catch up with them then. Presently he saw a Sadhu a little way ahead, in saffron robe and with a string of betel nuts round his neck. "I will walk along by him for a little way," thought Tapa, "and maybe he will give me his blessing, and so I shall win my fights with other boys and say my lessons well."

The Sadhu smiled down at Tapa and saw that his feet were tired. "I will tell you a story," he said, "and that will lighten your way. We are coming now to the Spring-Whose-Drops-Are-Pearls, and I will tell you how it comes to have that name.

“Once, long ago, the great God who cares for beggars and the poor, took upon himself the form of a poor, crippled man and lay by the Spring, too lame to rise and drink the waters. Now, there passed by a rich nobleman, his saddle bags packed with fine silver and brocade; and he stopped at the spring to wash the dust from his face. And the lame man, who apparently had only one leg, held out his drinking bowl and called to the nobleman: ‘Fill this for me so that I may drink.’ But the nobleman replied: ‘I am a religious man of high caste, and must not defile my hands by touching what you have touched;’ and he bent to drink the water as it gushed from the rock; but the water turned to bitterness in his mouth and made his thirst greater than before. Now when the nobleman had gone, a poor man came down the road, travelling to the town to seek work because his corn had been eaten by bears and his rice crop washed away in the monsoon floods. And the lame man called to him: ‘Fill this bowl for me that I may drink.’ And the poor man, who was of higher caste than the beggarman appeared to be, nevertheless took the bowl willingly and filled it; and when he went to drink from the spring, the drops of water that splashed on to the rocks around became beautiful pearls. But the lame man had gone. And now, there is the very same spring, and the company you follow still quenching their thirst. Hurry, little one, and catch them up before they go.”

So Tapa left the good Sadhu and hurried on and reached the spring just as the last coolies were leaving. The ladies had washed in the clear spring water, removing their rings lest the lime from the rock should

tarnish them. Tapa went up through the bushes to the spring itself and drank. And then, as he rose to go, he saw lying on the rock a monster pearl. That it was set in a ring meant little to Tapa; he was only conscious of the pearl and the Sadhu's story and the magic properties of the spring of which this was undoubted proof. He waited awhile for more pearls. But the water which caught the sun as it sprayed forth only trickled down the rock or evaporated.

Let it be said for Tapa that at first the delight of finding magic—of a miracle come true—pleased him more than the riches he had found. But alas! prosperity, which means saffron rice glistening with ghee and studded with almonds and raisins, and spiced meat and sweetmeats, dulls the most fanciful imagination. For, when Tapa passed that way again, riches wisely handled had raised him in station and swelled him in figure. He sat in the Prime Minister's dandy; and when they stopped to refresh themselves at the spring—women last, of course—I distinctly heard him call out to his wife: "My dear! On no account forget your ring!"

AHMED ALI

THE MAN ACCURSED

I will tell you how it all happened. You might say that I am trying to justify my own mistakes. But have you ever considered that a person who desires life behaves, sometimes, in a way which shows complete indifference to life? There is only one explanation for this perverted behaviour. The person has been so deeply hurt that he begins to avoid life and forgets its ways in his seclusion. He crushes the desire for it within him. But the love of life remains. In fact its fires burn slowly but surely under the debris of dreams. But having lived in a dream-world he finds himself a stranger to life. Still he fights on. But there comes a time when, having come very near to achieving his great ambition, he becomes over-confident and feels that he has conquered the feeling of bitterness, and behaves with so great a pride that he only succeeds in doing the opposite of what he intended; and instead of pleasing only repels the object of his love. The same thing happened in my case.

You know a little of my life, so I need not go into the various details. But I wish to recall one particular incident, although you know it so well—I mean the most happy and yet the most miserable period of my life—when I was in love with—. You remember, don't you? But how could you forget, for you sympathised with me at the time and felt deeply sorry for your unfortunate friend. Yet in spite of your

consolation and sympathy, what I had done could never be undone. I had killed love with love, and though I did not consider myself a murderer then, I do so now. Society will not take cognizance of this murder, for it condemns people on the basis not of moral but of social considerations, not for motives but on evidence. Law recognises only a social crime: morality does not come under its purview. Yet the moral crime is the most heinous; there is no cure for a moral criminal, though social criminals can be reformed; and I find myself condemned in the eyes of both Love and Life. Until the day I die I shall walk this innocent earth like the worst criminal who wants to hide his face from his fellow beings. But my crime was against love, and I can find no hiding place.

Now that she is dead I can speak of it freely and without reserve.

You know how it all happened. I loved her with all the intensity of my soul. She had brought me great wealth, and I was the proud owner of the most coveted treasure in the world. Wherever she went she took me with her, out shopping or calling on friends, and I followed her like a faithful dog.

"I have brought my Govinda with me," she would announce from the verandah of a friend's house. And I felt as happy as if I had got all her love within me, and as if her love mingling with mine, which was greater than all the deserts and vaster than all the oceans, had become the whole universe.

I loved her for many years, many years full of hopes and misery. When I went to sleep her image danced before my eyes, and I dreamed the most

wonderful dreams of hills and water and plains. In the morning I woke up with a celestial song in my heart, the song of her loveliness. Filled with the dream of love I shunned all company. She was my world and my universe, and I had no need of human companionship which only disturbed the image of the rose that bloomed in my heart. I walked this beautiful earth alone, conversing with the birds and trees and the soft breeze that murmured a hundred messages of love from her into my ears. My only companions were the moon and the stars and the sunsets which spread over the horizon like the glow on her cheeks. Her presence filled me as a child impregnates a mother with the awareness of its being. I wanted to be alone and live with her in my dream

I loved her for many years with the intensity of the summer sun, the self-confident fool that I was. No thought of selfishness entered my head, for love was too beautiful and could not be spoilt by the thought of sex. To tell you frankly, love had made me impotent. How she felt towards me I do not know. But looking back after all these years I daresay she must have felt bored with me, exasperated at my behaviour; for I had forgotten that she was a woman too. I was living in a fool's paradise, an enchanted world. Love is a combination of the noblest instincts of the soul and the body. It should be as physical as it is spiritual. If one element predominates, it either becomes carnal desire or remains an impossible ideal, a poet's dream. But I was young and too idealistic to know. Once, when B.—you know him, the dear old soul—advised me out of all friendliness to kiss her, do

you know what I did? I felt so insulted that I slapped my best friend. For many years we never spoke to each other. It was not until all this was over, when he found me in a restaurant, drinking heavily and sobbing over my glass, that he came up to me and we made friends again.

I never learnt what she really thought of me. That she loved me I have not the least doubt. I am as certain of it as I am of your deep affection for me. But I killed her love, yes, killed it with love.

It was a beautiful evening in the month of March. She had just learnt how to ride a bicycle. She used to go out with her friends. One day she asked me to go for a ride with her. By asking me alone she was conferring a great favour on me, and I was proud of it. The whole day I lived in a dream. I oiled my bicycle, cleaned it, and every now and then went out to see if there was enough air in the tyres. I fussed over my cycle as I have never done before or since. I counted every hour and each minute. And I started half an hour before the time of appointment. I reached her hostel twenty minutes too early. So I rode for one mile, two miles, and when I returned it was still only ten minutes to six. I made another round, and when I came back after a long time, as it seemed, it had not yet struck the hour. The moments passed with the patience of history.

Eventually she came out; and with gentle giggles and great shyness she mounted her cycle. She was self-conscious in the beginning, but she kept her

balance. We avoided the busy thoroughfares and rode on unfrequented roads.

"You ride perfectly," I said.

"Yet I am afraid of falling down. But I won't fall to-day," she said; "you would save me."

As she said this she looked at me, and in her eyes there was great tenderness, an expression of confidence and trust in me. I thought that it was love. What if it were not? I can live in that belief till the end of my days, and nothing can take it away from me. I felt proud like a person who has full mastery over the heart of another. There was no man more happy than me.

After a while she got bored with cycling. We were passing through the park, and she suggested that we should sit down. The sun was setting, and the bright colours had spread over the landscape. We dismounted our bicycles on the grass and sat down. She talked to me of her great tenderness, and I drank every word from her lips like the honey-dew of flowers. I forget exactly what she said on the subjects of her career, but I remember the fine recolouring of her face, the softness of her fingers and the rich colour of her heart was at her feet and my hand was on her in great place of weakness and flowing and deep peace.

"You are not most beautiful in your dress when you are alone, but yet when you are with me, I feel as if I were the only man in the world."

her, alone; it was unbearable. A koel suddenly burst into a melancholic strain from a mango tree, and a peacock raised his voice in a frantic cry.

“You should never think of dying. You are not meant for death”

A sad smile lit up her face; and I loved all the roses in the world and all the sweet-peas.

Then wistfully she lay back on her elbows and bent her head backwards and looked at me. I gazed into those beautiful eyes of hers. Two great oceans of love were those eyes at that moment, with their vast surfaces and unfathomable depths. And out of those oceans two big waves rose at the same time, ran into each other, joined in one huge wave and struck deep into my soul. I was engulfed in the joy of that wave; I was carried away by its force. I felt so illimitably happy that I sat tongue-tied. I wanted to say some thing, do some thing; but a fear took possession of me. I have no right to speak of my love, I thought. I was afraid of my love. In that instant I knew both life and death

A second time she bent her head backwards, far, far back so that it almost touched the ground. Her fine black hair fell over the grass, and her rose-coloured dress formed a halo round its black moon. Her lips twitched, and her eyes held forth an invitation to a kiss. My heart gave a sudden leap, the blood rushed, then stopped, in my veins. I could hardly believe my eyes. I had no faith in my good fortune. It is just my fancy, I thought. She is only looking at the sky. I, too, bent back and looked up at the sky. The sun had set, and outlined against the darkening horizon



"Tibetan"
oil painting 10' x 14'
T. HULBERT

stood the two broken turrets and the steepleless dome of a ruined mosque.

"What a glorious evening," I could not help remarking.

My words fell on silent air, and seemed to ring in my ears, reverberate and echo in the empty atmosphere. The magic which had existed until then vanished with the rapidity of a sunset, and darkness seemed to reign all around. A heaviness came upon me; and the feeling of joy was turned into sadness.

She sat up and looked away into the gathering dusk. Then she said with a little weariness:

"I feel so tired. Let us go."

I gave her her bicycle and rode by her side. Somehow we did not talk. She looked preoccupied and tired; but I was still lost in her nearness and somehow still foolishly happy in the thought of the favour she had conferred upon me by asking me to ride with her.

It is only now that I realise that it was an act of great thoughtlessness on my part. I was afraid of holding life in my arms, gathering it like the flowers. In itself it was not so important, perhaps, but in its implications. I was too ethereal, too much in love with love. She was ripe like a mango in July. She was ready for love; I was still afraid of it. Yet I loved her, and it was my love which kept me from kissing her or thinking of her as the object of carnal desire. She was too angelic for such worldly things. And it was, thus, my love for her which killed love.

Yet the break did not come with this incident, though she could never have forgotten it and the feeling of disillusionment consequent upon it. I loved

her as deeply as before. She made me human with the suffering which came with my love for her; she made me what I am. And so long as I did not escape into myself, so long as I was capable of suffering did I remain human also, and sensitive to the minutest details. It was later, when I had crushed all life within me, when I had escaped from the reality into a make-believe world which centred round only myself that I became proud and vain and inconsiderate of others' feelings.

When I lay in bed that night I felt, somehow, that she was annoyed with me. I realised that she had not said goodbye with the usual sadness at parting, that she had not turned back to wave to me at the turn of the corridor, that she had not talked to me on the way back. And as I thought of her behaviour before and after that incident in the park I felt more and more miserable. What had I done? I repeated to myself. And the more I thought of it the more unhappy I became. I said a thousand apologies to her in my mind. I fell down at her feet, and swore undying love. My love for her *was* undying. I loved her all these years. Though she did not rouse the same passion when I saw her before her death, for she had changed, yet, deep down within me, at the core of my being, the fire of love still burned as certainly as the sun burns with undying fire. I still loved her as she had been fifteen years before. I loved her in my love for her which has never died. . . .

The next day I met her at a party. My face was pale and drawn, my heart was bursting with uncertainty. She did not look at me as I entered. She was

playing with a cushion. I sat down, but I wanted to catch her alone, speak my thousand apologies to her, win her back. But they were all talking, laughing, and she, too, was joyous. I alone was quiet, for at that moment I was not a man alive. They all said to me :

“What’s the matter with you?”

“I am all right,” I replied and sank back into misery.

They all began to sing. One of the girls, Lila—you do not know her—insisted that I should sing. Even if you had given me the wealth of the world I could not have sung at that moment. There was such sorrow in my heart. I was heavier than all the rocks of Asia. When Lila insisted, she, too, turned round to me and said persuasively with a smile :

“Why don’t you sing?”

“I won’t,” I said so harshly that immediate silence fell upon the assembly. It was just the opposite of what I wanted to say. My heart was full of love for her. I could not afford to displease her. But, somehow, I could not bring myself to sing. I seemed to have lost my voice. But I thought she would understand. I had a feeling that she and I were inexplicably one, that she was an inseparable part of me, so completely that she felt every emotion that passed through my mind, that we were actually one life though two bodies; and I took it for granted that she understood everything I said or did. Of course, it was my imagination, my own emotion working within me, which I had no right to expect she would understand.

I tried to make an excuse and said to Lila, quoting from a poet :

"When your heart is sore, you cannot think of songs or poems."

One of the men made fun of me :

"Oh, he is in love. . . ."

This made me feel more embarrassed ; but she did not look at me after that ; and when we were sitting down to dinner she announced :

"My seat is here," and sat away from me at the farthest end of the table.

The announcement was not only meant for me, but for the whole company so that everyone might know that it was all over between us. Before that she had always sat near me, sought me out in a crowd and veered round towards me. But now—it was over. . . .

I could not bear the room ; I could not bear the crowd. I stood rooted to the ground and gazed at her abjectly, pain in my heart, throbbing in my mind. They must have all read it in my face. I was behaving like a fool. But in love there is no self-respect, there is no dignity. Dragging the chair she sat down and gazed at her plate. But I am certain she felt what I was feeling. I felt demented. Everything went dark before my eyes. Without saying a word I reeled out of the room.

They must have been aghast, for not a sound came from any one. But as I was clambering down the steps of the verandah a sound of laughter followed me.

A wave of blinding jealousy rolled over and into me. She was enjoying herself ; she did not care for me. She was in love with some one else. This thought ate into my being, sawed my heart into a million pieces. I walked the whole night, tore my hair, beat my chest

loudly with my fists. I pinched my flesh. Pain had numbed my body and made me insensible to pain. I must have walked twenty miles that night. When I came back into my room a dreary day was breaking. But sleep was as far away from me as night was from the dawn. In place of my heart was a deep incurable pain. I wanted to stab it with a knife; I wanted to hold it in my palm and wring all feeling out of it. I thumped my chest with my fist. I felt the pain throb like a wound unendingly.

My eyes fell on a pen-knife. I bared my chest and stabbed the flesh gently with the point of the knife. No pain. Then a new idea took possession of me. The pain from my heart had gone into my head. I started carving the shape of the heart on my chest; and when I had finished it I began to carve an image of her inside the heart. The blood trickled down, but it soothed me. I took a mirror and gazed at my handiwork for a long time. The pain had subsided and I felt tired. Other people had awakened and I was afraid of being seen. So I buttoned up my shirt and lay on the bed. A gentle pain reappeared, and I fell asleep. . .

I will not describe what I felt. I will not describe how I behaved. I was a man accursed. I shunned all society and spent my days roaming the fields. For three days I ate nothing, and when I ate the food stuck in my throat. Late at night I crept into my room like a thief, and early in the morning walked out again. My friends looked at me. They wanted to console me. I must have looked mad, for their faces showed such deep concern. But I avoided them and ran away from human beings. . . .

When I went to see her again she had gone. Where? Why? I wondered. She had not told me that she was going away. I thought that she was still in town, and only to avoid me had she had me told that she had gone. I felt more desperate. But she had left no address behind, so I could not even write to her. . . .

I saw her after a fortnight when she came back.

"I hope you are feeling better now," she said gently.

How did she know that I was ill? But then she must have seen it on my face that night. Or did someone tell her of my miserable condition? My heart palpitated, but I felt happy. She knew how I had suffered. It might soften her heart, make her love me. I mumbled an apology.

"I understand," she said and smiled a peculiar, inscrutable smile which seemed a mixture of happiness and certain knowledge as at the confirmation of a secret discovery. I could not talk to her for a while.

"But something is troubling you," she said tenderly. "It's much better to speak of your worries and share your sorrows. You will tell me, won't you?"

A lump appeared in my throat. My tongue seemed to be pulled inside deep down within me. I felt choked with emotion. How I wanted to speak of my love, how I wanted to bare my heart to her. But how could I put all that I felt into words? They were so inadequate, so insufficient to express even the minutest part of what I felt. When I thought of the words 'I love you', they sounded so vulgar that every-

thing within me revolted at the very thought of them. That was not what I felt. My emotions were far more divine than human language could express. She was for me the harmony that binds the stars into a unity, the thought concealed in its reality. She was a motion in the air, a melody passing in the distance. She was too godly for such earthly men as I; and I could not bring myself to say the words that would have brought me the fulfilment of my dream, the object of all my impossible quests.

I evaded her question and began to tell her about my work, of all the things that I had planned. She did not talk much, and soon I came away, feeling dissatisfied at having left her so soon. My desire for her company was vaster than the hemispheres. My eyes could gaze at her for centuries and know no satiety. But soon her smile danced before my eyes, her words rang in my ears. A feeling of reconciliation, even of happiness crept into my heart. I felt quenched like the earth after the first shower in June; and I walked like a human being for the first time for a fortnight. . . .

It went on thus for many years. I could never tell her I loved her. I loved her so much that I could not have expressed my love.

Then she went away; but my love knew no death. We met occasionally. She had a tenderness and a deep regard for me. Together we would sit and for hours we would talk, and those were the richest moments of my life, for which I bore all the suffering during the impatient months of separation. When I

was with her I was the happiest man alive. When I came away my heart was at her feet. I suffered a thousand deaths for that little life which enlivened my being in her presence.

I was a jewel embedded in the mud; her light had it revealed to me. I did a hundred things to better myself, to make myself worthy of her love. And all the good things that she wished me came true.

Then came a time when she left off wishing me any good in life. My ears longed to hear her say the wonderful things; but the oracle had ceased to prophesy. Doubts began to assail me. I felt that the strings of the instrument which produced those mighty harmonies had snapped. I was filled with deep regrets and a reminiscent sadness. Psychically I felt that she was lost to me. I was not buffeted by the storm as of old, but a philosophic sadness descended upon my soul. The song of death began to sound in my ears in which Time and Eternity played the parts of drummers. Along with it a superstitious dread took possession of me that no good would come to me any more. Love changed to self-pity; and I walked the earth like a man who from the highest office had been degraded to the gutter. My will deserted me, and I began to wallow in the thoughts of the worst degradation. Yet I still wrote to her, and she still replied. The love on which I had built my life was still so great that I fought on with the forces of defeat within me.

I never spoke to her of my love yet expected her to love me. But she was a woman too. In a long letter she explained that she must get married, that she had met another man.

"But you will understand, Govinda, won't you? One must think of society. . . ."

The dam of my sorrow burst. Self-pity overflowed the banks. I took to drinking and thought myself a broken man. It was then that B. discovered me in a restaurant and we made friends again.

I never saw her again until another fatal day. She never wrote to me. I passed through many phases of cynicism and bitterness, said I never loved her, that she was just a *bourgeoise* fond of comforts and money. I laughed at love, made fun of it, said that no such thing existed, that it was a mere illusion of disillusioned minds, a juggler's trick that children love to see, the ridicule of gods for men. Yet still I drank, still I rolled down the rocks of apathy.

Then I discovered the pleasures of the flesh. I played with women, held them in my arms, crushed them like lemons and threw away the wrung-out skins. My ideals fell off me one by one, insidiously, like the petals of the rose from the stem. They must have made the earth beautiful; but I did not see. I made acting with women a fine art. They were easily duped and loved me. I did not know till then that laughter and indifference mixed with a little attention and thoughtfulness bring a woman to your feet. She has no use for seriousness, for all the tumultuous harmonies resounding in the soul. She has only one purpose in life, one aim. And for the fulfilment of that aim she becomes the hunter and plays all the subtle games of the chase with unfaltering mastery. But I beat them at their game. I was very gentle with them; I was very kind; and they loved my ways and my deliberate

attentions and love-making. They wanted me to marry them; they wanted to die for me. But I was a man accursed and walked the earth like a proud Colossus. I became selfish; I became vain. Having eaten of the apple of paradise I ignored the fruits of the earth. My heart had shrunk like a pumpkin in the sun. The wonderful juices of life had dried up within me. So long as I suffered I was human; so long as I loved I was a man. Now I became a beast, insensible to pain, insensitive to all the beautiful things of life. I began to live within my own world which centred round my ego, my sole self. I was no longer the same person I used to be. Those who knew me then wondered at me. I did not care. They admired me, I knew, for they were all cowards and did not have the courage to face life as I did. I was a coward, too, but the nature of my cowardice they did not know. I spat at them.

Then by a mere chance, many years later, I met her again. It was like a cold smart, a dull blow. Gradually, through misty bitterness, rose the dim spires of the golden city that rose once upon dusky dreams in the dim valley of Time. Unconsciously, against my will, I was traversing those enchanted lanes now hazy with the accumulated dust of years. The past rose before my mind like the slow strains of a symphony rising gradually into a *crescendo* of crashing sound. My head burst with the noise of the thousand instruments of an orchestra.

Except for the first sight and greeting, when she turned suddenly pale, she behaved with perfect equanimity. Her poise made me feel bitter. She had

no right to be calm in the face of all my shattered dreams.

She talked to me of my work, she hinted at the things she had heard about me. I wanted to tell her that she alone was responsible for my ignominy, for all the bad things that she had heard about me. But I felt that a wide gulf lay between us separating the two ends of Time. Yet deep down within me I wished to bridge this gulf, when helpless bitterness rose like a crashing wave and carried away the yet unlaidd structures of the bridge. I could not be natural. Hate filled me all within and burnt me like a pitiless fire. I wanted to catch hold of her, I wanted to kill her that she might not remain calm in the face of the storm that raged within me.

Abruptly I got up. Gently she said to me :

"Do not be bitter with life, Govinda ; that is my advice to you. . ." Hurriedly I made good my retreat with a curt goodbye.

But I was in a forest, and could not find my way out. Two things predominated in my mind ; bitterness and hatred. And the more I thought of her composure and equanimity the more bitter I felt. Then her parting words rang forth in my ears. They filled my mind like the noises in a nightmare. My head was bursting with their unbearable sound. My tongue was parched, my throat was dry. In my heart was a hollow which echoed all the nightmarish sounds. I thumped my chest with my fist. I was suddenly reminded of her image which I had carved there. Frantically I tore open my shirt, frantically I bared my chest. The

marks had become permanent and glared like the eyes of a tiger in the night. I could not bear the sight of her image; I could not bear the sight of her. She was no longer mine; she was *his* wife. . . Madly I whipped out a knife from my pocket, madly I thrust it deep, gashing it across her image and my heart. It produced a fine sensation at the moment. I felt relieved. But slowly with the loss of blood I became weak and fainted.

They put me in a hospital; they wondered at my behaviour. Some said it was an accident, others that it was attempted suicide. . . .

Soon I recovered and became whole again, older and wiser . . . I saw her many times afterwards, but it was never the same again. The last time I saw her she was ill. It was in the fateful month of March. The sun was setting and its glow came in through the trellised balcony; and the air was rich with the aroma of sweet-peas. By a rare coincidence we thought together of the past.

"I love the aroma of sweet-peas," she said gently, and a soft, inscrutable sadness passed across her face, and her eyes narrowed as if to catch the fading glow of memory.

"And all the roses in the world. . . ."

The pain reappeared in my heart. . . .

I did not see her again. And soon afterwards she died. They found her drowned, wearing a rose-coloured dress and a garland of sweet-peas. I did not love her with the same old frenzy. I did not even

dream of her as I once used to do. But she beat inaudibly, like the pulse of the heartless world, at the core of me, like the breeze crooning in the trees a soft, eternal lullaby. . . .

J. O. BARTLEY

(1) CYNTHIA'S SICKNESS.

(*Propertii Carmina II xxviii*)

The charms and magic circles fade and fail,
By the dead hearth the half-scorched laurels lie,
Down the sad sky no moon tonight will sail,
And the black ominous bird croaks : *All must die.*

In one slight craft, our love, our fates now take,
Under dark sails, the dark infernal sea ;
For two, not one, the passionate plea I make—
"If she lives, I live ; death, taking her, takes me."

O Zeus, preserve her to me ; else will she
Earnestly sitting at thy feet, outpour
Her whole long tale of danger and death to thee
And all the troubles of her life before.

This mercy, O Persephone, is thine,
Nor will great Dis be crueller than thou—
Ye have so many shades, comely and fine,
In your dark halls, that ye can spare her now.

With you are Iope and Tyro fair,
 Europe and Pasiphae, ill-led,
 Impure; and Trojan girls with branching hair,
 And girls of Greece, beloved once, now dead.

Each Roman girl in death escapes you never—
 All these lustful Avernus hath in thrall :
 With none the gift of beauty lasts for ever,
 And, late or early, death awaits them all.

* * * *

My light, since thou art spared to me, to-day
 Give pious thanks, and bearing gifts with thee
 Attend Diana's dances; duly pray—
 Then piously spend ten votive nights with me.

(2) EPITAPH OF A LADY

(*From the Latin*)

Pause, Stranger; read. I have few words to say.
 I mark a woman's grave. 'Tis beautiful;
 And so was she. Her name was Claudia,
 Whose husband held her in his heart of hearts.
 She bore two sons. The one she leaves on earth;
 In earth the other lies. Her discourse charmed;
 And with domestic step she kept her house.
 She spun her wool. I have said all. Pass on.

E. M. R. LEWIS

DESTINY

In a rugged and inhospitable land there lived a penurious Shepherd who wished he were a king.

"I am sure," he said to himself, "that I have the talent and aptitude for kingship, or else why should I feel such a positive hunger for pomp and power? Besides, I am handsome and strong. My regal bearing would capture the loyalty and admiration of my subjects, while I should be fully equal to the arduous duties of office. Yet all I have to rule is a few thin sheep with the aid of a mangy dog. Has destiny forgotten me?"

He had plenty of leisure in which to meditate, as have most shepherds. Half his time he spent tormenting himself with the contrast of what he was and what he would be; the other half he occupied in day-dreaming of miraculous interventions of fate in his life that would put a crown on his head and an orb in his hand. Perhaps, he thought wistfully, a king will come hunting in these mountains one day and see in me such a strong family resemblance that he will at once make me his heir. For who knows if I was not born in a palace and snatched from the arms of my nurse by an eagle who bore me to these mountains to be educated by foster parents? How wrong of them to die before telling me my true lineage.

At other times he would pretend to himself that he was saving the king's life, and being adopted out of

gratitude; as a variant, he would perform memorable feats of valour trying to save the sorely wounded king's son from lions, and the dying lad would make his father promise to take the brave Shepherd in his place. What a pity, he thought, that there are no lions here.

Or he imagined that in the mountains he would discover the Philosopher's Stone, and making his way to the king's palace would turn it to gold overnight, a service which would ensure him the hand of the King's lovely daughter in marriage. But the fact was, he knew very little indeed about geology.

One day, as he passed from one enchanting and meteoric career to another in this manner, he met an old man walking slowly in the mountains with a staff.

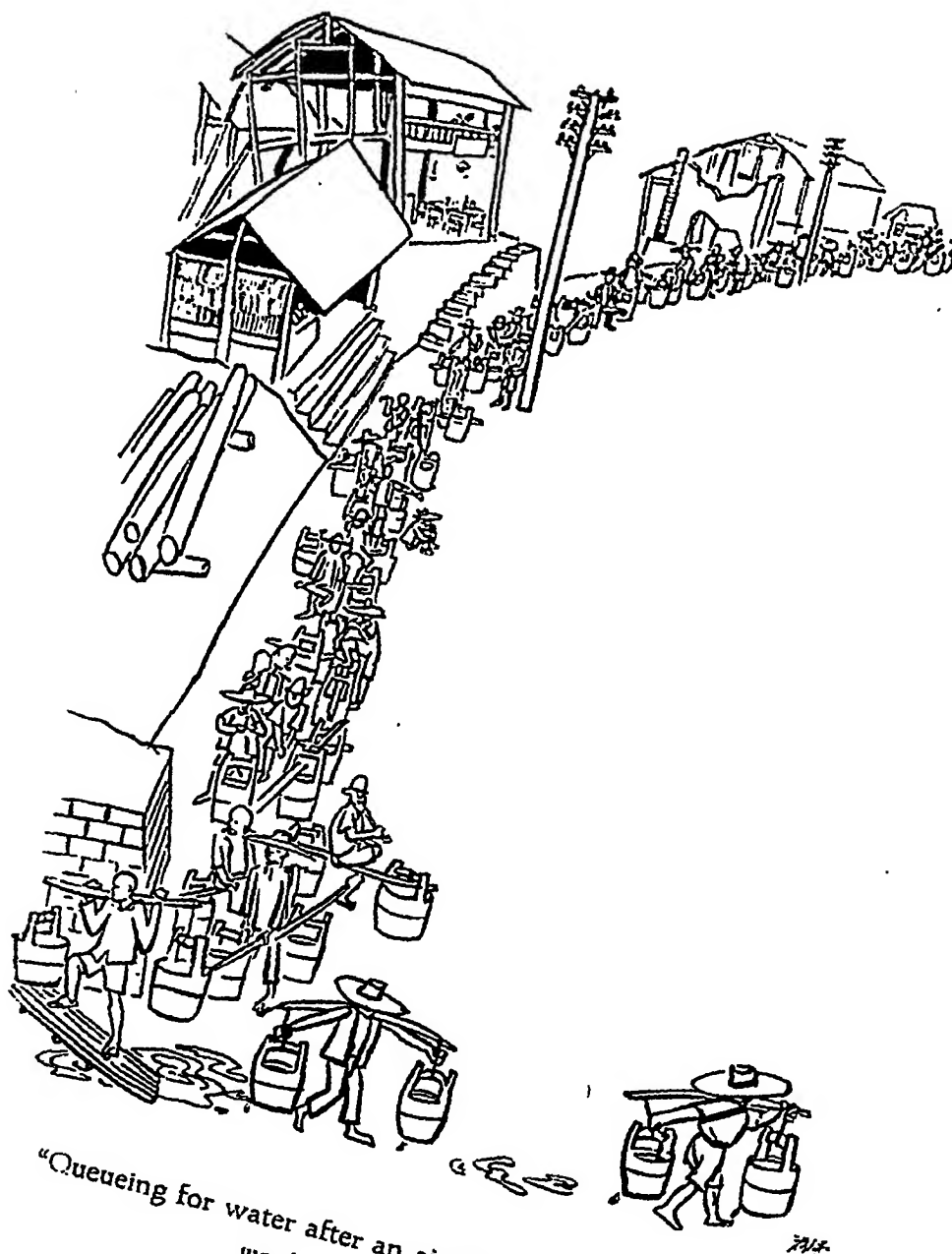
"Peace be with you, Shepherd," called the old man in greeting.

"And with you likewise, Philosopher," answered the Shepherd absently. "I suppose you haven't by any chance got that about you which turns things into gold?"

"What use would it be to you if I had?" replied the old man looking slightly astonished, "Gold sheep would be immovable and a gold dog could not bark; so your occupation would be gone."

"Ah, but I want to be a king, not a shepherd," explained the young man. "And plenty of gold is very important to kings."

"So that is how it is, is it?" said the old man; then, after a moment's thought, he added: "Very well, follow me." Wild hopes making his heart beat violently, the Shepherd followed. After a long interval of scrambling over rocks, across ravines and up



"Queueing for water after an air-raid, Chungking, 1942"
was' drawing 10" x 13"
YEH CHIEN-YU

precipitous slopes, the old man suddenly stopped. "Look there," he cried, and pointed with his staff.

The Shepherd looked, and beheld a deep well or funnel descending straight into the heart of the mountain. The sunlight did not pierce that black and yawning chasm at their feet and, gingerly bending over the edge, the Shepherd could discern no bottom. "How deep is it?" he enquired.

"A matter of sixty feet only," replied his guide. "It looks deeper," the Shepherd remarked.

"That is because the top is narrow like a bottle," replied the other. "It widens out inside, and there is quite a sizeable cave when you get down."

"And what is there in it when you *do* get down?" the Shepherd asked.

"Everything you long for," answered the old man. "May I assist you to descend?"

But the Shepherd drew back from the lip of the mysterious cave. "What do you mean by everything I desire?" he muttered.

"I mean what you meant just now, Shepherd. You want to be a king. The first step for one who wants to be a king, in your—er—unprivileged position, is downwards."

"You mean that treasure or the secret of my destiny await me below?"

"Both," replied the old man. "But the sun is beginning to set and we must make haste. Will you go down or not? Make up your mind."

"How *can* I go?" retorted the Shepherd peevishly. "Sixty feet is a goodish drop, and I am not endowed with wings to fly up again, unless haply they are

waiting down there neatly folded with printed instructions for use."

For answer the old man laid aside his staff and with dexterous fingers began stripping the leaves from a mulberry bush, that grew close to the cavern's mouth, and plaiting them into a thin rope.

"I weigh 130 lbs," observed the Shepherd casually as he watched the old man's skilful fingers.

"Then this will just serve," came the placid answer. The Shepherd realised that his destiny could not further be gainsaid, and knotted the rope round his middle. He lowered himself over the edge, rested his weight on his stomach, and kicked around inside the funnel for a foothold. But he found none for, as the old man had said, the rock shelved sharply away underneath.

"Now let go," ordered the old man, digging his heels into the ground and holding the rope taut. The Shepherd looked round at the lovely familiar hills of his childhood, their crests turning golden in the rays of the dying sun, at the anxious brown eyes of his faithful dog, at the dark green mulberry bush, at the bright green grass so nutritious for sheep; he drew in a deep breath of the sweet evening air, and let go. In a moment he was swinging wildly down in deep pitchy darkness that went over him like the smooth cold sea, that laid firm eager hands encased in velvet gloves upon his half-naked body and drew him steadily down into itself. Above him, as he cast up desperate eyes, a small blue skylight diminished swiftly like the mouth of a bag being drawn together with strings. How do I know that this fiend is telling me the truth about

sixty feet, he thought; I am at his mercy and I only met him half an hour ago. His hair stood on his scalp and over his straining muscles his skin became goose-flesh. His feet touched bottom suddenly.

"Are you down?" called a faint voice, and the Shepherd looked up and saw the old man's head bulging over the side of the funnel's tiny circular skylight far above, like an incipient eclipse.

"Yes. What do I do now?" called the Shepherd, convulsively seizing the rope as his voice, only slightly raised as it was, reverberated hollowly.

"When your eyes get used to the dark you will see something," came the answer, nor did the Shepherd particularly warm to it. He felt as if his eyes were pulled up to the skylight as to his last hope. With an effort he turned them away and looked fearfully around him. At first he could distinguish nothing. Then he thought he saw something—a faint glimmer of light. Then he saw another, a pinpoint glittering in the darkness. Horror enfolded him. Eyes, they were the eyes of creatures silently watching him. Now they multiplied everywhere, all round, hundreds, thousands of these creatures were creeping forward out of the darkness surrounding him. And he saw that just as they were all round him, so too they were above him; they gleamed and twinkled like a starlit night.

"See anything yet?" shouted the odious voice from the world of light and laughter and safety far above.

"I see eyes," he called back. Let him provoke them to attack, and end the tension one way or the other.

"Eyes?" called the old man. "Look closer."

Desperately the Shepherd closed with his enemies—and collided with something hard and gritty. It was the wall of the cave. And then he saw it was the wall that glittered.

"Diamonds," he shouted. Diamonds, by the thousands. In a moment he was stuffing his pocket, his hat, every fold of his garments, with great diamonds which he pulled out of the wall as easily as if they had been plums in a pudding.

"Have you got enough?" shouted the old man. The Shepherd looked up and saw the skylight was very pale. Around him the diamonds had ceased to sparkle brightly; only a few smears of light were reflected from clusters of them here and there.

"Yes," he called. "Pull me up." He groped for the rope.

"You can't come back this way," the old man shouted. "The rope won't bear the extra weight. You must go by the tunnel. Look for it on the right. It leads you out of the cave."

The Shepherd suddenly realised that the diamonds had indeed been glittering round him on three sides only, and now, his eyes adapted to the fading light that remained in the cave, he dimly apprehended the mouth of a tunnel on his right hand, a mouth of blackness which by contrast showed up the cave as a cosy lighted room, a blackness, a deadly empty nothingness, which nevertheless waited for him, crouched at his side all the time like a nameless beast.

"Pull me up," screamed the Shepherd, tugging the rope. "Quick, Quick."

"The rope will break," called the old man, but the Shepherd felt it tighten. Up he went. The rope won't break, he said to himself, because of a few ounces of diamonds. Then suddenly he felt something give. He hurtled back, and his knees struck the rock with painful force. The rope had broken.

"I told you it would break," called out the old man, who had fallen over backwards on his head. "If you want the diamonds you must take them out by the tunnel." The Shepherd looked up. How faint the light above had become. Soon he would be in absolute darkness. At the mercy of what was in the tunnel. Or here, forever, in the cave, first to die in agonies of hunger and thirst, then as a mouldering corpse, staining the musty air, and then as a tangle of white bones.

"Make some more rope," he called hoarsely, and began to fling away the diamonds. Now it was dark, really dark. He could see the stars, the real stars, through the mouth of the funnel above, but its sharp outlines had gone. Where was the old man? Panic seized him. He began to shout and rave. He tried to beat the darkness off his body with flailing hands. Something struck him lightly on the face. He shrieked—then seized the rope. In a few moments he was clambering out of the cave, and stood dripping and shivering in ecstasy in the cold night air.

Without a word, the Shepherd and the old man turned away from the scene of their adventure. Followed by the dog, they stumbled on for some long while in the darkness. The moon rose. At last utterly exhausted they threw themselves down at the foot of a

scanty tree. But as sleep laid hands on their eyelids, the Shepherd mumbled :

“Why didn’t we think of tying up the diamonds in my kerchief and drawing them up separately?”

“Ingenuity”, whispered his companion, “is but one of the qualities needed by kings.”

* * * *

The Shepherd was woken in bright morning by the old man. “What! You still here?” he said rudely.

“I should like to show you something,” said the old man.

Grumbling that he had seen enough already, the Shepherd nevertheless found himself following the old man. Up and up they climbed, higher and higher into the mountains, where the Shepherd rarely found occasion to go. At last they reached the top of a high pinnacle, and could survey the mountains round them for scores of miles, the morning being exceptionally clear.

“Look there,” commanded the old man, pointing with his staff.

The Shepherd looked, and in the far distance, between two great mountains, saw a valley he had never before noticed, and beyond it stretching into the hazy distance a great and verdant plain.

“Oh what a wonderful looking country!” he cried. “How much better for me if I lived there than in these miserable hills. Even a poor shepherd might stand a chance in a country like that—especially if someone gave him some sort of start in his career.” And he

looked longingly at the far-off inviting country. "But alas," he added sadly, "it would be hard enough for a man alone to get there across these mountains. To bring his sheep and a few possessions would be impossible."

"Just so," remarked the old man, handing the Shepherd a strong pair of binoculars to give him a better view. "But it would be easy enough to walk there along the tunnel under the mountains."

"Great Heavens!" gasped the Shepherd, as he focussed the excellent glasses. "So that is where the tunnel leads, is it? And to think one could carry a few hundred diamonds along with one! Ha! I see a city, where the river enters the plain. It lies on a fine river, spanned by seven high arched bridges. What a superb situation! What fine public buildings set in wide lawns and gardens! What handsome houses for the nobles and wealthy merchants to live in! What splendid glasses these are! Even all these leagues distant I can see the city is positively humming with traffic and business. Down the river and along the roads flow the commerce of five continents. How wonderful it would be to be king of that country! I can see the king's palace dominating every other structure and gleaming in the sun. It is magnificence itself, extracting the utmost from every architectural principle and material known. I can see it clearly. I can even see the royal standard floating from the roof. Would that it were mine! But what is this? It hangs listlessly at half-mast. Some one of moment has died. There can be only one explanation. The king is dead. He died last night."

The Shepherd lowered the glasses and turned to the old man, who stood listening, a peculiar smile upon his face.

"In a tunnel under the mountains," he said, in a low voice, "there is neither day nor night, and a man travels as fast in either. The king died last night. This morning a shepherd with a fortune in diamonds might be emerging from the bowels of the earth and entering, to the amazement of all, the gates of the city. Who knows what such a portentous appearance might not mean for him? He would meet the Princess, sorrowing for the death of a wise king and a loving father, beset with perplexities, probably faced with intrigues, even perils, her emotions upset and her heart cast down—she would listen to an honest man arriving like a messenger from the regions through which her great father's spirit had first to pass. . . . She would raise him up. . . . Destiny! you called me, and I did not follow. And why? Because of a few childish fears of the Unknown that is better named Opportunity.

"My chance has passed. I was not big enough for the moment. Nothing lies before me now but a life of endless regrets, and dreams of what might have been; and to wake from these to the real offices of a sordid and futile life will be a daily sharper pain than the sword's edge gives. It would be better for me to die now, at this precipice."

And there was, indeed, an entirely adequate precipice, a sheer drop of several hundred feet, just before the two men.

"If you would care for a good hard shove," said

the old man amiably, "my services are as usual entirely at your disposal."

The Shepherd sprang back about six feet very suddenly. "You have no sense of the fitness of things at all," he said coldly. "I scouted that suggestion as soon as it left my lips. A vulgar gesture, to abdicate because Fate played me an ironic trick. True nobility is to know oneself. I admit I was cowardly last night. But the cause of that goes deep into my past and my being. I was wrong to suppose fate offered me kingship. She never did. She offered me only futility. Very well, I must live that out. I will day-dream on, and suffer what I must at my own hands. I will contribute my bright yellow thread to the mysterious design she is weaving on her divine loom. I will not snap it off. I will live."

He turned on his heel and strode off, but the old man dexterously retrieved the binoculars as he did so,

An ingenious philosophy! And he laughed maliciously.

* * * *

For a full twelve months the Shepherd did, indeed, live the life he had envisaged at the brink of the precipice. He woke in the mornings with a feeling of disaster and, as memory of his lost opportunity returned, a sickness almost physical seized him, and he could scarcely muster resolution to rise from his bed. Sometime he sought forgetfulness in business. At the lambing season he hardly gave himself a moment to think; but when memory flooded back he felt the bout of work, by adding poignancy and freshness to his weary sense of chagrin and loss, had served him as ill

as a dangerous drug. Best, he thought, to think of it always, and so to make it, as it were, his friend, as some patients do their pain. Worst of all, was to wake from a vivid day-dream in which he mentally rearranged the actual course of events of that fateful day, and marched singing down the dark and hideous tunnel to success, to fame, to love. . . .

In fact, his obsessions had a noticeable effect on his physique. Dizziness, fainting spells, racking headaches often prevented him from carrying out his work properly; his flock diminished; he ate less and less well. The roof of his cot leaked. He got fever. He thought he did not care.

During one of these bouts of high temperature, he thought he was weaving a rope from the fleeces of his sheep. As he wove it, so he descended it. It went on and on for days. Every now and then an old man handed him a pair of binoculars and chuckling said: "You can see for yourself. You've a long way to go yet. We have dug it much deeper since you were here last time."

He woke and slept, but the dream wound on like a string through his mind, sleeping and waking.

When the fever wore off, he found himself weak and yet anxious to do something. Suddenly, quite for the first time, the idea of revisiting the terrible cave came to him. I'll make a rope and see if it really happens, he said to himself. At the worst, it will give me something to do. And if there really are any diamonds, I may as well have them. They're sure to come in useful some day. Instantly, he felt perfectly

well, gay, and brimming with goodwill. His dog was overjoyed.

It took him but a few days to make himself, not a rope, but a strong rope ladder, of sheep's wool. It looked thoroughly workaday and reassuring. Then he sought for the cave. He found that too, but it took him some time. Then, first thing one morning, with the day before him, and bright sunshine flooding into the cave, he made fast his ladder and descended. With him he took a candle of mutton fat.

By the light of the candle, he soon convinced himself that the old man had certainly cast no spell on him as far as the diamonds were concerned. There were plenty of them, studding the walls of the cavern, and lying on the floor where he had thrown them. He collected, in the course of some hours' hard work, more than six hundred diamonds, some of magnificent size and colour. He knotted them into a bundle, about the size favoured by the ordinary tramp on the roads. Meanwhile he did not omit to study the opening to the tunnel, or gallery, driven from the cavern into the mountain. That too was, he felt, perfectly straightforward. The floor was smooth; one could watch one's step and, so far as he could see, there was no maze to get lost in. He set his dog to guard the head of the precious ladder. I will just explore the tunnel a *little* way, he said to himself. I can always come back if it gets difficult. Before long he forgot time, and went on and on, calm and unruffled, by the light of the smoky candle.

It took him, he estimated, nearly a day and a night to pass through the whole tunnel. By the end of

that time he was bone weary and stumbling along in total darkness, thinking of nothing but setting one foot before the other. Here and there he crossed streams from which he drank. He never thought of food. Finally, he emerged quite unexpectedly on the cool hillside. Faint whitish signs of dawn were breaking out on the night sky. He lay down and slept till the hot sun awakened him.

On rising, his first thought was of refreshment. Not far off he saw a road, and smoke curling from a chimney. He made his way thither and was soon seated in an inn before an ample repast. Near him, similarly engaged, he noticed a gentleman whom, from his fashionable not to say foppish garb, the Shepherd took to be a man of some importance in the city. He wondered why such a man should be breakfasting at so humble an establishment, and wished he could get into conversation with him, thus perhaps learning something of conditions and opportunities in the city. But he judged that overtures from a mere shepherd would be coldly received, and therefore kept his eyes for the most part modestly fixed on his own plate.

However, the opportunity he wished for was not denied him. For the gentleman, after studying him for some time with furtive interest, at last seemed suddenly to make up his mind, and rising from his place went over to the Shepherd and, saluting him, offered him a fine cigar.

"We of the city," said the Gentleman, laughing, "do not know how to enjoy the fragrant air of such a sweet country morning as this; we rise late, after sleeping all night in smoky chambers, and then sleep

our lungs and larynxes anew with smoke from a smouldering weed. From your ruddy countenance and strong limbs, friend, I deduce that your habits are quite otherwise. I believe I am addressing myself to a shepherd, and, doubtless, to an artist in that exacting discipline?"

Whereupon the Shepherd found himself subjected to a minute inquisition into his way of life, origins, habits, wealth and, above all, the topography of the mountainous regions whence he came and from which he extracted his simple livelihood. At first the Shepherd supposed he had fallen in with some police spy, set to watch travellers crossing the State's frontiers, and was at much pains to conceal the real route he had in fact taken, inventing details of an imaginary journey over rather than under the mountains. However, he gradually revised his opinion, owing to the growing interest the Gentleman evinced in the details of that mountain route, and what lay beyond it—an interest that grew to the exclusion of everything else the Shepherd had to say. Unmistakable signs of anxiety crept into the stranger's questions, which had at first been made with but casual politeness, and with every detail given of the difficulties of the way and the hardship of living in that infertile land—the Shepherd had to confess that there were neither inns nor even the humblest villages there—the Gentleman's face grew more troubled. The Shepherd at last concluded that he was dealing with an exalted but none the less felonious fugitive from the city's justice; and thinking he might in that case as well deal frankly with him, he bluntly voiced his suspicions,

titles and authority." At these words his face went pale and his hands shook.

"You will pardon the ignorance of a stranger like myself," said the Shepherd; "and equally my curiosity, which is natural in one who intends to enter the city within an hour or so. But would you tell me why these terrible events must shortly be apprehended—and with such certainty? For I notice that you are alone; but many others must be in danger. Yet they do not flee with you; at least, not in this direction."

At these words the Gentleman coloured deeply. "Somebody once said," he replied, "that men, when disaster is imminent, are liable to be frozen in helpless horror where they stand, as a rabbit is transfixed by the eyes of a snake, unable either to fly or otherwise to avert the danger, even while there is yet time to do so. Those of my friends who have the sense to realise what is about to happen are in that condition; others, of course, are too stupid to imagine anything could ever touch their senseless round of daily amusement; and some few have drawn their swords and vowed to perish at the side of their mistress, the Queen. But the fact is,"—he studied his polished nails with care—"I am but an indifferent swordsman, and might in that last stand of the *ancien régime* be more of a hindrance than a help."

But now the Shepherd, too, went pale with horror. "The Queen's life in danger!" he exclaimed. "That is indeed frightful! Is it certain that the Throne must be overturned today? If so, my plans are indeed ruined. Poor lady, what can she have done to deserve this fate? What intrigues have been fomented against

her since that day, only a year ago, when I saw the flags of the city lowered in mourning for her great father?"

"I see you have some idea of how things have been going with us, even in your remote wilderness," remarked the Gentleman; "for, as you say, the beginning of the end could be discerned on that very day. But I am afraid I don't agree with you about Her Majesty. She richly deserves her fate. The tragedy is that she will pull us all down in ruin with her, the silly little scatterbrained spendthrift! Absolute Monarchy is the soundest of Governments usually, but it breaks down when it is handed over to a chit of a girl in her teens, with no notions of administration—not even to adding up a petty-cash book correctly—and an unlimited appetite for dresses, jewels, spectacles and entertainments on the most colossal scale!"

The Shepherd felt hope flame up in his heart anew. "Am I to understand," he asked, "that a financial crisis is at the bottom of this threatened catastrophe to the Monarchy?"

"You have analysed the position, Shepherd," replied the other. "The Queen cannot meet her creditors, usurious scoundrels, and they refuse to extend their various moratoria further. They have whipped up the people against her, and intend to set up an impious Government of their own, called a Republic, incidentally enriching themselves out of the estates of the Nobility. It's a perfectly simple state of affairs, which I believe has precedents in history, but it seems to have defeated the wits of everyone to find a less violent solution."

"Ah!" cried the Shepherd. "What a thrice damned poltroon was I a year ago; I that had then the means to save her from all this unpleasantness! Sir, your nervousness has lost to her but one wavering blade at her side; my cowardice a year ago lost to her an inexhaustible treasury in which she could have destroyed her hoggish moneylenders through sheer overeating. I could then have poured a sack of gold, and better than gold, at her feet, and satisfied her every wish."

"You amaze me," said the Gentleman in reply. "Are you then not a shepherd but a magician down on his luck? What a pity! The Queen adores exhibitions of conjuring and sleight-of-hand, unless indeed," he added bitterly, "it is in connection with her treasury, when she simply refuses to learn how the trick is done."

"No, I am but a shepherd," the young man answered, "and my sole claim a year ago to have trespassed on Her Majesty's sorrow in her bereavement was that I came by a lot of money in a very singular manner, or would have done, had I had a scrap of manhood."

"In that case, I am afraid you have not fully understood the position even yet," the Gentleman said. "A year ago, the Queen had wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, wealth created by her illustrious sire, from several useful punitive expeditions and several still more successful speculations, together with an ingenious engine called the Income Tax which regularly transferred a fixed proportion of his subjects' income into his treasury. The Queen inherited this money. She thought it would last for ever. Since no one could din

any sense into her head on that point, I scarcely think she would have felt the need of the assistance of a shepherd, however rich and well-meaning. In fact, she would have laughed at your clothes and your wooden boots, my bucolic friend. But there, she is a disagreeable girl. It would give me great pleasure, knowing how your first audience would have gone, to see her throwing herself at your wooden boots as her saviour *now*—”

“Then there is not a moment to be lost!” cried the Shepherd, who had gone all colours at this description of the humiliations he had been within an ace of receiving at the hands of the Court. “The old man was right. Who can be certain of his destiny until he is at his last gasp? I shall be a king to-night. Come my good fellow, you bring me to your mistress immediately.”

The Gentleman was perfectly staggered at the change of tone and aspect of the Shepherd at these last words, which seemed to him the ravings of a lunatic. The Shepherd seemed to have added inches to his height, and he flung his cloak over himself as if it were a purple mantle. “You must be mad! Go to the city if you will, but for me it is death! And if the magistrates are still there you will be locked up for vagrancy without visible means of support.”

At that the Shepherd opened the kerchief and revealed the blazing mass of diamonds to the Gentleman, who could not doubt for a second that, uncut though they were, they were genuine. “Come,” he said again, “I will not allow you to make a fool of yourself. In fact, when I am king, you shall have

some of the honour of discovering me. And now for the city."

Moving as in a trance, the Gentleman offered no further objections. The ill-assorted couple were soon on their way, on foot, since the better to conceal his flight the Gentleman had brought no conveyance with him when he set out before dawn. By midday they passed the city's gates, and found everything orderly, though excitement was in the air, and the townspeople were gathered into knots at corners and squares, discussing the news. They soon found themselves at the palace gates, which were strongly guarded: The corporal in charge stared at the Shepherd with undisguised hostility and it was not until the Captain of the Guard, who was well known to the Gentleman, had been fetched, that they were admitted, even without papers, on a plea of urgency of life or death. It took longer still to reach the audience chamber, in spite of the regard in which the Gentleman was held at Court for, though timid and tactless, he was honest and unambitious. After being delayed by the Chamberlains they were delayed by the Queen, who was having her hair done for the anticipated final tragedy; but this was of course not wanted, for her beautiful tresses, done up in the height of fashion, allied to her sensuous pouting mouth, dark sparkling eyes, sweet sly expression and slender body, destroyed the Shepherd as a scrap of paper is shrivelled by a furnace.

In recognition of the fact, however, that her Majesty, but for his intervention, would be in an hour or so her late Majesty, and also because he had come to bargain, but principally because of his humiliating

reception at her hands a year ago (as it would have been had he, in his naivety, presented himself), he made her only the most formal of bows, and stood stiff as a ramrod, so that, as she afterwards admitted, she at first thought him the leader of the republican mob come to demand her surrender. But she looked at his strong body and brown skin with some interest even before the Gentleman, with many polite circumlocutions and apologies for his unsophisticated appearance, explained the real burden of their errand; after which she looked him boldly in the eye, blushed slightly, clapped her hands and cried, "Then we are all saved! Thank you so much! Show me the diamonds immediately." And when the Shepherd poured them in a cascade of flashing lights at her feet, she so far forgot herself as to shriek, "How perfectly scrumptious!"

And in another moment the Gentleman did, in fact, have the pleasure of seeing the Queen at her saviour's feet, but she was simply there to rinse her hands in the spreading pool of diamonds. "And these are for me," she murmured, "all for me!" At this point, however, the treasurer, a worried-looking official, ventured to demur with words among which could be distinguished: "satisfaction of certain immediate and pressing State obligations" and "minutes count in averting involuntary liquidation." "Dear Treasurer," breathed the Queen, "what a man you are for words! That is what they are—liquid, unbelievable."

For the first time the Shepherd spoke. "I entirely agree with your Excellency," he remarked coldly (but with an effort). "I am not aware of the precise total of her Majesty's debts, but I suggest you take these

and settle them today!" And he bent down and scooped up two handfuls of diamonds and passed them over to the Treasurer, who took off his velvet cap and held it out for them. The Queen gave a little scream of dismay as the diamonds disappeared, for the Shepherd bent down and two more handfuls followed the first. As he did so his face brushed the Queen's hair. He reeled on his feet, but two more handfuls followed. The Queen tried to grab the remaining gems, whereupon the Shepherd seized her little hands firmly, forced upon the little fingers and extracted their prey, including the two biggest diamonds in the whole collection.

"Oh, you brute," cried the Queen, tears coming into her eyes. "Is this the way to treat Royalty? I will have you beheaded."

But the Shepherd saw unmistakable signs of approval on every other face round him. He decided to draw on his full credit balance as it then stood. "Your Majesty is in pawn," he answered firmly, "and until your bills are paid you are simply a piece of merchandise which any one can buy. I am not going to buy you. I am going to take a receipt for those diamonds and, when the last bill is paid, I shall take what remains—which should include one or two of these bigger pieces, and settle down quietly as a jeweller somewhere. And now I wish you good day."

Bending down he lifted her from the floor of the audience chamber, and replaced her lightly on the throne. Then he turned to go.

"Don't go," cried the Queen in anguish. "We would hear more of your plans. You must accept some

recompense, something honorary of course. We can knight you," she shouted as the Shepherd neared the doors; "you can be 'By Appointment To The Queen'." Just as the Shepherd was turning into the corridor she cried, "I wish to place an immediate order," at the top of her voice. The Shepherd came back. "Yes, Your Majesty, what order?"

"Those two diamonds I tried to pinch—I mean, I liked so much,—do you think you could set them for me?"

"When my workshop is established certainly. But they will require a large setting. They must weigh ninety carats apiece."

"What about two golden crowns?" whispered the Queen.

* * * *

The splendour of the marriage of the Shepherd Saviour of the Kingdom (suitably ennobled for the look of the thing) and the young Queen was only surpassed by the gorgeous pomp of his subsequent coronation. When the two crowns of dull gold were simultaneously placed upon their heads as they sat enthroned side by side, the two diamonds flashed and gleamed with inconceivable lustre under the pale rays of light that fell upon them through the stained glass windows of the great cathedral. It was almost as if that symbolic act had created a new Creature in Authority with two terrible eyes of white fire; and this did not fail to provide inspiration to the Court poets, to the Queen's high pleasure. She was in love with her husband; she was in love with excitement; she was in love with

the bizarre turn events had taken; and she planned everything in a whirl of activity.

The King-Elect found the ceremonies of Royalty more elaborate and more truly regal than he had ever imagined. He had in some ways seen himself as a simple, unassuming and hardworking monarch, ever toiling for the good of his subjects and careful of the due of the least of them—amongst whom he had himself once been numbered. But he found himself surrounded with good fellows, wonderfully good fellows, friends yet deferential, liegemen yet adept in the arts of tactful advice, whose feelings he found he simply *could not* hurt by failing to follow out their deferential suggestions as to how he should bear himself as a King of whom so much was expected. The Queen chose these companions herself.

Under their tuition he found himself acquiring regal polish and kingly hobbies. His liveried retainers stretched for miles. His thoroughbreds were a joy to see. His wardrobe occupied twenty separate dressing rooms. He gave parties and banquets on a lavish scale. He held tournaments for the cavalry, reviews and P. T. competitions for the infantry, at which big prizes were given and at which he read out stirring addresses on the need for preparedness, written for him by his Confidential Secretary in Ordinary. He hunted with the Nobles and played tennis with the Gentry. He gave several garden parties for people of the lesser sort. The crowd could and did cheer him as he drove to and from these diversions in the city.

He loved his wife dearly. She so obviously adored him as a King that he could not deny her. She took

as much interest in his workaday clothes as her own, and parts of his state vestments she stitched with her own hand. Before the coronation she rehearsed him and rehearsed him till he was dizzy. And afterwards she murmured, as they stood bowing to the multitude on the Palace balcony, "You are wonderful. I never dreamed there were such Kings." His feet ached, his hand was numb (the orb weighed 19 lbs. alone), his ermine gown was heavy as lead and tickled the back of his neck unbearably, but he was, he told himself, in heaven.

He found the intimate moments of Kings and Queens comparatively rare, and as a man used to privacy he was astonished how many people felt they had to oversee the least thing he did. But all this fed the flame of his love for the slender figure of his Queen, who never ceased to plan and arrange their joint lives on a vast and extremely public scale. She never seemed to tire, though she seemed light as thistledown, but he, who had sought nightlong for lost sheep in the craggy mountains, flung himself dead done on his bed at the end of the day—or night—and as he slept his Valet in Ordinary removed his clothes and dressed the inert King in a pair of yellow silk pyjamas richly embroidered in gold braid, with the royal arms embossed with jewels on the pocket of the jacket. Sometimes the Queen came in and watched this being done, and her eyes would fill with tears. "He *does* look sweet," she said; "I must get him a pair of mauve ones for the spring." And she would return to her own chamber.

It was sometimes in the King's mind to send for the Treasurer and find out how they stood in the matter

of funds; the diamonds, he thought, should last them a good while, though he had small idea of the price at which Kings and Queens buy their requirements. He did mention it once or twice, and immediately trumpets blared and pages rushed off shouting, "His Majesty commands the presence of His Excellency the Treasurer." But always he had to rush off to fulfil some important engagement of which the Queen reminded him before the Treasurer could be found.

The renaissance of the Kingship was tremendously popular. It was soon discovered by the Royal Genealogists that the new King was not a shepherd by birth, but had been snatched from his cradle as a child by an eagle and borne to the mountains; he was really scion of the royal stock of a nearby country, and the question arose whether he should assert his rights to rule that country too. This produced a welcome boom in the armourers' trade. His romantic journey in a tunnel under the mountains appealed to everyone. It was the children's favourite bed-time story, while the savants at the University were divided as to whether he dug the tunnel himself with a miraculous pick, or a miraculous spirit dug it for him with an ordinary pick; and the two schools came to frequent blows, besides producing a whole literature on the vital question.

However, after a time the King began to have the feeling that the people in the streets cheered him less than they used to do. He mentioned this to the Queen, who said: "Don't worry, my Heart's Delight. I know how to handle these people. To-morrow is my birthday. I will give orders." And on the Queen's

birthday the whole city was fed free at the Royal expense; oxen were roasted in the streets, enormous quantities of confectionery and dainties were distributed, and a vast birthday cake was ingeniously put together from sections cooked in the Royal Ovens, so large that it covered most of the principal square in the city, and stood eight feet high. Everyone got a slice. At night, there was a huge firework display, and the Town Hall was burnt to ashes. The Queen was the heart and soul of the party. As she went to bed yawning, the King asked if she thought it would settle the matter.

"Of course," she said. "It gives employment."

"And how much does it cost us?"

"Oh money! Didn't I say it gave employment?"

But the Queen was mistaken as to the effect this entertainment had on her subjects' sentiments. Not only did the people cheer them less and less in the streets; a time came when they ceased to cheer them at all. Then one day a stone was thrown at the King's coach. Then stones were thrown at the palace windows. Soon their Majesties had to be closely guarded; the King felt this was absurd and decided to have the matter out. He sent for the Treasurer, and waited grimly while the usual farrago of noise was started to convey the impression that he was being fetched.

"My love, that wretched man is always late," said the Queen anxiously, "and you are giving the prizes away at the Yacht Club at three. It's half past two already, and you have to put on your uniform. Run along now—I'll see the Treasurer for you and tell you what he says."

"I have sent for the Treasurer and I intend to see him," replied the King. "You go and give away the prizes at the Yacht Club."

The Queen studied his set face and then sighed deeply. At that moment the Treasurer was announced—or rather, pushed his way into the room, for it seemed as if some attempt was made to stop him.

"Your Majesty," cried the Treasurer, "I have been trying to see you for months."

"I have been trying to see you," growled the King. "Now out with it. The people are throwing stones. Is it because we owe them money?"

"If only Your Majesty could find time to exercise Your Majesty's great financial acumen more often, I would indeed be grateful. In a word, Your Majesty is right: The treasury is empty. We are living on credit, and the bills are coming in rather insistantly."

"But what about the taxes?"

"Your Majesties"—ahem—advisers hold to the theory of the Unbalanced Budget. We spend, Your Majesty, more, considerably more, than we harvest in."

"And the cause of the gap is our Royal entertainments?"

"If Your Majesty could economise. But I fear it is too late. The tradesmen are threatening to sell us up."

"Tell them not to be so silly," broke in the Queen. "Perhaps we are a bit slow in paying up. Still it's they who eat at our expense, and see the fireworks. They've had their money's worth already. What more do they want? It makes employment."

"Your Majesty is undoubtedly right," answered the unhappy Treasurer. "At my instructions this theory of political economy is being taught sedulously in the schools and universities. Unhappily the orthodox view of finance is held by those moneylenders and bankers who hold our notes of hand."

"In other words," said the King, "we need ready money to tide us over Quarter Day?" The Treasurer bowed his head.

"Nothing could be easier," said the King, smiling; whereat the Queen, the Court and, most of all, the Treasurer, stared open-mouthed. "Saddle my horse," ordered the King. "And order a squadron of cavalry to get ready. Let each man carry an extra saddle-bag. We must get some more diamonds at once. I know the way. In future you must tell me more of what is going on."

Loud cries of admiration broke from the Court, the Queen flung herself into the King's arms crying, "My *clever pet*! My perfect King!" and the Treasurer mopped his brow with a big red handkerchief.

In less than an hour the cavalcade was clattering through the city. At every tradesman's shop, men or women rushed out and waved pieces of paper. "Patience, my good people," cried the King. "We shall pay every penny, and more."

Rapidly the King and his soldiers traversed the road along which the Shepherd had previously come. Before long they reached the inn; then dismounting, the King led them over the field and up the hills towards the spot where he conceived the opening of the tunnel to be.

Suddenly the King stopped. "What is that?" he cried, pointing. Before them stood a high wall, with spikes along the top and strongly barred gates, surrounding a big enclosure. Sentries with fixed bayonets patrolled the wall. Above the gate was a large notice board reading: "*The Royal Miracle Diamond Mine Company. Keep out.*" The King strode up to the sentry by the gate. "Let me in, d'you hear? I'm the King."

"My orders is not to let no one in," answered the soldier; "not even if he was the King hisself. Sorry, Guv'nor."

"But this is preposterous," said the King. "Anyway, this is *my* diamond mine. Don't you see, it *says* so,—let alone the fact that I discovered it myself."

The sentry scratched his head. "I tell you what, sir," he said; "I could fetch the secretary to have a word with you." The King ordered him to do this at once. The soldier disappeared through a wicket gate, and in a short time re-emerged, a severe-looking man with him.

"So you are the secretary, are you!" said the King in a voice of doom. "Will you kindly tell me why you have given orders to have me kept out of my diamond mine by a common soldier?"

"I regret to have to correct Your Majesty," answered the secretary, "but in the first place this is not Your Majesty's diamond mine. It belongs to a Joint Stock Company incorporated under the felicitous name which you may have perhaps supposed, but in error, to indicate Crown property. Actually the Company purchased the land on which the mine stands

from the inn yonder, and the mining rights were granted by Your Majesty's government some time back—or perhaps it was before Your Majesty's coronation. The Queen may have signed the paper. Doubtless she signs so many, and omitted to bring the matter to your notice."

"You must have been infernally quick on the job of cashing in on my discovery," retorted the King. The secretary bowed.

"That is business," he said. "The Group with which I have the honour to be associated runs a special research section for looking into all likely propositions such as this."

"I wouldn't be surprised," said the King slowly, "if the Group to which you belong foments treason against Her Majesty and me?"

"That, Your Majesty, is libel, answerable at law. Undoubtedly we are, in this concern, men of progressive opinions. Some of us believe it is high time this country had a measure of self-government through parliamentary institutions, which could keep a watch on such matters as public expenditure. But that is an opinion only. If Your Majesty's subjects appear discontented, I can only suggest it is due to a love of freedom and a demand for reform which, too long denied, may make them pass beyond the stage at which they are amenable to law. Our directors began as common men and, if they sympathise with common men, can you blame them? And if they are for the same reason popular, can you wonder?"

"I have lost the power of wondering to-night," answered the King. "Now I'll tell you something.

So long as the Court can pay its bills, the people are perfectly happy. I need diamonds to pay those bills, and I should like to know what is to prevent me from entering here with my troopers and taking them?"

The secretary shook his head. "Many things will prevent you, Your Majesty. Kings may do much, but they cannot go against the course of history. Law, logic, economics and, above all, facts prevent you from doing this thing. You think the King is above law, perhaps. But your servants, the troopers, are not. And those who traffic in stolen goods are not. People want their bills paid, not to be asked to act as fence, even to a King. But even if they were made to accept the jewels, what then? May I point out that you have made a great mistake in degrading diamonds into general currency? Diamonds are valuable because they are rare. Once already you have flooded the market with diamonds. You made something out of it, but prices in the city and beyond fell disastrously. Many were ruined outright. It was the fear that you would repeat this dose of inflation which led us to acquire your miraculous diamond mine. To make the same amount of money as last time you will have to bring out several times the number of stones and, even so, the threat of a further issue will keep prices on the downward path. Rest assured we have not sold many of your diamonds, Your Majesty. Oh dear, no. Our aim is to seal up the mine, and prevent any more coming out. Otherwise you will reduce their value in a few years to that of coloured glass. Then you would have recourse to your mine in vain. No, Your Majesty, it will not do. You cannot be allowed to go

against the course of nature. Diamonds must stay rare. They have not made you popular, as you thought; they have put every merchant who sells rarities—and that means all merchants, in some degree—against you. But perhaps you don't read the financial papers?"

"No," gasped the poor King, quite confounded by this reasoning. "Do they differ from the rest?"

"They are telling the commercial community, Your Majesty, that what a King like you can do for diamonds, he may do for gold, for iron, aye, even for wheat; that is, to drop its price to a quarter, or a tenth, of the present level."

"Would not that be an excellent thing?" asked the King humbly.

"Your Majesty, how would you like the price of Kings to be reduced to a tenth by increasing the supply of them proportionately?"

"That seems to be precisely what you aim to do, with your parliament," retorted the King with some asperity.

"That is quite a different thing," said the secretary. "But anyhow, it is no use your entering the mine, for though we do not intend to put the diamonds on the market, we have removed most of them. It's very difficult to find them now, and you certainly would not find any in the few hours you intend to put into the job."

"You are an extraordinary man" said the King. "May I ask whence you originate?"

"I am a graduate in the Science of Wealth."

answered the secretary, "and hold a diploma of the College of Salesmanship."

The King saluted his victor mournfully and, mounting his horse, rode sorrowfully back to the city. When he reached the Palace, he found that he was once more a Shepherd. The populace had risen, and he and the Queen had been deposed by a National Assembly which was sitting in the former Audience Chamber, passing resolutions romantically by the light of torches. There had, however, been no bloodshed, as no resistance had been offered, and the Shepherd was overjoyed to find his wife safe in her apartments, trying on a new dress.

"Whatever are you doing?" he demanded.

"As a jeweller's wife I must be in the height of bourgeois fashion, such as it is," she replied. "After all, we shall still be people of some consequence. But I shall have my work cut out getting a move on with this frumpish lot."

The Shepherd buried his head in his hand. "We have not even the diamonds," he cried in despair. "My darling, you will have to lead the fashions of shepherdesses."

"Well, the costume is far from *chic*," her ex-Majesty remarked thoughtfully, "but they have a certain simple charm, which might serve as a base for further experiment."

At that moment a Chamberlain presented himself at the door.

"Your Majes—I mean, Mr. Shepherd," he said, "the President of the Assembly presents his compliments and would be glad of your assistance in a certain matter."

Listlessly wondering what further wretchedness was in store for him, he followed the Chamberlain. In an apartment near the Chamber, the President awaited him.

"My dear sir," said that worthy, "no ill feelings, I hope. I have no doubt you will find yourself a niche in the life of our new community. I wish we could grant you a pension, but I fear the state is hardly in a position—. However, you will not, with your talents, be at a loss. Meanwhile, we are in a little difficulty. We are drawing up the electorates, and we have come to that part of the country in which you formerly resided. Now tell me, what is the population?"

"One," answered the Shepherd.

"And that one is?"

"Myself."

"Now that is a pity," said the President, clucking his teeth. "In the ordinary way, it would follow that you would be returned unopposed as the Member of Parliament for that area. But the first article of the new Constitution is that no one of Royal Blood shall hold office in the new Parliament. That would be too much. . . . Had you never been a King, there is little doubt that we should now be sending you a telegram requesting you to take up your duties in the city. And very remunerative duties they would be too," he added in a murmur. "A Member in such a strong position would be highly useful to, for example, the Royal Miracle Diamond Mining Group. I have a premonition that such a man would become Prime Minister. He would be irremovable, and the security of his tenure would give him a huge advantage. The creation of

one or two such little—er—sinecures is a cardinal point in drawing up a Constitution, don't you think so? Well, it can't be helped.. But we must not admit ourselves beaten when the principle of regional representation is at stage. What else is in the country?"

"Sheep," replied the Shepherd, his head splitting.

"Capital!" cried the President, beaming. "We will have one of your sheep. Sheep make excellent M. P.'s. I suppose a sheep could go into the division lobby?"

"Oh, he will follow the majority," the Shepherd assured the President.

"You know, I am really excited about this little political discovery of ours to-night," said the President. "Sheep as M. P.'s! It must be fully exploited. With an appropriate sheep dog or so, it will give wonderful results. The loss of your experience, my dear fellow, in this matter, is a national tragedy." And the President spread his hands in a comical gesture.

The Shepherd returned to his wife, whom he found decorating a little crook with blue ribbons. "My little elf," he said, drawing her to him, "I have made a complete mess of everything. But for my anachronistic wish to be a King, you would now be the wife of the Prime Minister, with a large income mainly derived from participation in enterprises to prevent diamonds becoming as plentiful as wheat, and wheat as plentiful as the sand of the shore."

Before daylight should reveal in all its cold clarity their complete and irretrievable downfall, the Shepherd and his wife, each with a little bundle of necessities and provisions for the journey, had set off on their long

and arduous trek over the mountains to the Shepherd's old home. The ex-Queen was wearing sensible shoes. Perhaps that was the real reason they set out so early.

Some time after this, the Shepherd was zealously watching his somewhat diminished flock in his familiar scanty pastures. When a man has family responsibilities he is apt to take his job seriously and have eyes for little else. Hence, he did not see the figure of an old man approaching, using a staff to aid his footsteps, until the latter drew level and accosted him.

"Good day, my dear Shepherd, and how goes it with you nowadays?"

The Shepherd swung round, started, and then clasped his old friend by the hand. "Peace be with you, Philosopher," he laughed, "and my answer to your enquiry is: pretty fair. And if anything should go amiss, I can always write to my M. P. about it," he added, grinning.

"You are doubtless referring to the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister," smiled the old man. "He has certainly made a name for himself during question time in the House. Whatever nasty ones the Opposition put up to him, he merely says 'Bah' to them."

The Shepherd laughed heartily. "I trust the people cheer him as he drives by in his top hat and woolly coat," he said. "Does he smoke a cigar in the tradition? And how is the Diamond Company?"

"The news may interest you," said the old man. "You were always ambitious. Know then, that Parliament's days are numbered. At every election the Totalitarian party is gaining strength. This party laughs at parties and parliaments. They believe in

National Unity and Greatness. When they have a majority they will do away with the old regime, and show the people how they are oppressed by all the neighbouring countries. In war there are always opportunities. With your pretty wife, your pure blood and race, and your strong arm, you will certainly make a career for yourself. And should anything ever go wrong, the Diamond Company might like to have a King up its sleeve."

"Alas!" said the Shepherd, "what need, since they can always play an ace at will? I thank you for your advice, and above all your kindly and sustained interest in me. I think I shall stay here. The people down below are an unstable lot. They will get sick of the Totalitarians in time, also. Then there will be an unpleasant interlude, and then we shall have a Federal Soviet State. And as I am the sole population of this country, I shall be the President, the Political Commissar, the Chief of the Secret Police and the Workers' Soviet combined. For that quadruple honour I think I shall wait, and regard it as a fitting reward for all my struggles to better myself."

"It seems to me that the substance of the advantages of the position are already yours," remarked the old man.

"Just so," said the Shepherd, "just so. However, when they are formally confirmed, I may have to go to the city once a year or so to attend the National Convention and record my fervent vote of confidence in the government. This will give my wife a chance to see how the fashions are progressing. I'll wager she won't be a skirt's hem behind them."

"I won't take you," replied the old man.

IRIS YOUNG

CH'ENGTU TEA-SHOPS

The tea-shop is a feature peculiar to Ch'engtu. In the whole city there are I don't know how many of them. On the average there is about one in every street; some bigger, some smaller. Most of the smaller ones are established in shops and have some twenty tables. The bigger ones are established inside public buildings or public temples, or in the interior of family ancestral temples, or in the precincts of private mansions, and they contain forty odd tables.

The tea-shops have three main uses in the life of the Ch'engtu citizen. First, they serve as exchange places for all trades. The goods are not necessarily brought into them; it is enough that the buyer and the vendor go together to a tea-shop. Of course, there are various tradesmen who come to deal with you in business matters and to discuss the market prices. For each kind of business, there is a fixed street, a fixed tea-shop, almost a fixed time; but tea-shops of this kind are not very numerous.

Another convenience of the tea-shops is to serve as places of reunion and discussion. No matter if it is a regular religious brotherhood or a charity meeting, or an occasional gathering of several, or several dozen, people to discuss some particular event, fortunate or unlucky: these meetings are generally held at tea-shops, where the participants can freely air their views,

discuss, negotiate, even quarrel. If you want to talk confidentially, you have only to use your professional slang, and nobody will take any notice of you. If you have a difference of opinion with somebody and you want to compromise and save your face and are not anxious to go the magistrate, or if you want to take the first steps towards the opening of a suit, you can always, invite several people to the tea-shop in order to settle the matter, and it is like the soldiers of Han Sin: the more the better. The opposite party, of course, proceeds likewise. The guests you have invited meet at the tea-shop. If one of the sides is somewhat more powerful, and the other side more conciliatory, it will be very convenient to discuss the matter there and decide it on the spot. Everybody will quarrel loudly for a time, then the so-called go-betweens will mediate between the two sides and try to adjust their views, after which they will give a good lecture to the more conciliatory side, so that the more conciliatory side will be considered the losing party. But the loser will not need to make any apologies; he will merely have to pay for tea at several, or several dozen, tables, and the affair will come to a close. If the two sides are equally powerful and neither of them consents to climb down, then the go-betweens will not say anything; they will let you quarrel to your heart's content—quarrel to the point where you can no longer refrain from blows. They will let you fight, your first missiles being the tea-cups, then the wooden stools. They will wait until blood has begun to flow, until the whole street is in a turmoil, and until the onlookers, fearing there may be loss of life, will try to overcome the

opponents, until the street watchman, the Police Chief, the Chief of the Ward, will rush in, will seize with vengeance the victim of the row, who will have first to indemnify the whole tea-shop for the damage done. Then the shop's own waiters will get busy; the broken stools, stored in the attic, will rapidly disappear and the broken tea-cups, long kept in the cup-boards, will also be robbed, and the losing party will have to pay for everything. Almost every tea-shop, therefore, is very fond of having people coming to them to adjust their differences. But, unfortunately, since the police administration has been reorganized, the tea-shops have begun to lack this common source of revenue, and people who absolutely *must* adjust their differences have hardly begun, before they find themselves confined in the resourceless solitudes of the police lock-up. The first police administrator was Mr. Chow Shan-p'ei; from the start he was regarded as a nuisance by many people, and therefore was nicknamed "Chow the Bald One".

The third use of the tea-shop is that of a drawing-room and resting-room for people of the lower-middle class and below. But as such, it is limited to men; for a woman to enter a tea-shop is as bad as her sneaking into an opium den; those who do it are regarded as no good. In the houses of middle-class people there is, of course, a hall; in the hall there are tables and chairs; maybe there are even so-called drawing-rooms and studies; in the house there are tea-pots and tea-cups; there are also servants who prepare and bring in the tea. But custom requires that, when visitors arrive, having exchanged a few

words with them, you should if you regard them as friends, invite them to a tea-shop. This has three advantages; the first is that you can talk there as loud as you please; you can talk about everything without restraint, no matter if what you have to say is filled with just commonplace words or words of importance, curses or tales; you need not care in the least about your neighbours, and your neighbours won't care a straw about you. So that, when you pass before the door of a tea-shop, you only hear an unbroken stream of voices, among which rise the loud shouts of waiters, crying: "Tea is coming! Hot boiling water coming! Tea money is following! Many thanks."

The second advantage is that, no matter whether it's Spring, Summer, Fall or Winter, if you like to bare your arms, you have only to take off your coat; you are much freer than in a private house. Moreover, if you want to have your head shaved, or if you want to have a massage, or to have your pigtail plaited, there are men of the trade waiting for your call, and what do you care if your dandruff is falling all over the place, and your hair clippings are flying about at random, falling into other people's cups! It doesn't matter a bit, because, although the word "hygiene" has already been imported, people use it only for a joke; as for taking off one's socks and stretching one's legs, bare to the knees for pedicure, this goes on *under* the tables and matters even less.

The third advantage is that if you have nothing to tell each other, you can always do your own business; and, if you have no business to do, you can always

clasp your knees and listen to your neighbours' conversation and quietly observe all that is going on, either inside or outside, which is a better manner of idly spending one's time than sitting lazily in your house, like a stump. You can also hear the latest news, broaden your knowledge, and, as for what is called drinking tea, it's hardly more than empty words. Of course, nobody would avail himself of such a convenience if it was expensive. The price for a cup of "Autumn Hair" is 3 sous; for a cup of "Bird's Tongue Spring Tea" 4 sous; but you can always add a tip. Moreover, as a rule there is no consciousness of time; you can drink first two cups, then push your cup to the middle of the table, call to the waiter: "Keep it", and then, after one or two hours, you can still resume your drinking; you have only to pour in some more hot water; one or two tea-pots are plenty.

But the tea-shops are not all of them very clean. In the smaller ones the high tables with their black varnished boards and red varnished legs are generally covered with a layer of dust. The lower ends of the legs are completely caked with mud applied to them by customers' feet. The seats consist of narrow and light high-legged wooden stools. On the ground, a thousand layers of mud, deeper here, shallower there, have the appearance of waves on the surface of a river. Above one's head, among the rafters, there are sure to be soot and cobwebs. As for the tea-cups, among one hundred, there are maybe ten which are intact; the others are crockery patched up with various pieces. Moreover, the skill of the mender is very high indeed; he can take

pieces of broken cups of every colour and description, and join them together, whatever their degree of concavity and their dimensions, and guarantee that they will not leak. There are also saucers made of copper-foil which are at the same time thin and dirty. To sum it up, the advantages of the tea-shops are chiefly metaphysical. The Ch'engtu people, most of whom love to tarry there, have after all perhaps, metaphysical souls?

Translated from a Chinese novel, "Before the Storm" by Li Chieh-Jen, hitherto unpublished in English. The period is about 1900.

S. PIGGOTT

INDIA'S PLACE IN THE PREHISTORIC EAST

Twenty years ago the ancient history of India was put back a millenium by a stroke of the spade. The discovery by archæologists in the 1920's of the ancient cities of Mohen-jo-daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab, excavation of these, and subsequent investigations at a hundred smaller sites from Baluchistan to Bikaner made possible an extension of the historical perspective of India beyond the time of Alexander or of Asoka, beyond even that rather shadowy people, unattested by any tangible monuments but inferred from linguistic and literary evidence, who

called themselves Aryans and were responsible for the compilation of the oldest Vedic hymns somewhere about 1200 B.C. The newly discovered ancient civilization of western India in the third millenium B. C. was represented by towns, tombs and the myriad relics of daily life revealed by the excavator; unlike the primitive life reflected in the Rig-Veda it can with truth be dignified by the title of a 'civilization', literate and as highly evolved as any of its contemporaries in the ancient East.

I have the good fortune to be, by the accident of war, one of the very few European prehistorians who have had the opportunity of studying the material remains of this, the most ancient Indian civilization, at first hand in museums and to some extent in the field, and in this essay I am taking the opportunity not so much of repeating the well-known descriptions of the prehistoric Indus cities, but rather of discussing informally in the light of modern research how prehistoric India stood in relation to the other great centres of early culture in Iran and Iraq: its origins, its affinities with and differences from its neighbours, its rise and collapse, its heritage. Let us try to keep the brickbats and potsherds in the background and to look at the process as an historical one. "I dare say we shall not get very far," Roger Fry once said when embarking on an adventure in art criticism, "but," he went on, "we may note some rather strange facts, and may with luck arrive at some suggestions of correlated ideas." So may we.

The story begins, not in India, but in Iran. Up to the present we have found no traces of early civil-

ization in the Indus Valley or in Baluchistan which can be dated as early as the first village communities of agriculturalists which mark the beginnings of civilization in Iraq and Iran, while the earliest Indian settlements we can identify show traces of their connection with already well-established centres of early culture, further west. Before 4000 B.C. small villages of settled farmers had been established at oases and by rivers on the edge of the Persian desert: settlements primitive enough in many ways but with clear indications that the peasant arts and crafts embodied in them were by no means in their infancy. In western India at this time we may on reasonable analogy infer a small scattered population dependent on hunting and food-gathering for subsistence (a state of barbarism represented to-day by the Veddahs of Ceylon), and indeed such primitive beachcombers survived along the Makran coast to be observed by Arrian during Alexander's retreat. On such a barbaric substratum impinged the first humble beginnings of civilization, spreading eastwards from the Iranian uplands, for near Fort Sandeman and Loralai have been found the remains of small villages which had been built and occupied by people who made and decorated their pottery in the same distinctive manner as the inhabitants of northern Iran, whose settlements, of about 3000 B.C. or earlier, are known from Tabriz to Damghan and southwards to Nihavend and Kashan. What route these people followed is not clear, but earlier farming communities allied to those of the Kashan neighbourhood had a settlement near Merv in Russian Turkestan, and the caravan route east-

wards to Balkh and beyond, so important in later times as a link between north Persia and Central Asia, gives a hint as to the probable way by which these bearers of the elements of civilization found their way to north Baluchistan. And round about the same time, and by an unknown but presumably overland route, people arrived to make settlements in south Baluchistan who were in a comparable state of civilization to that of the Loralai villagers but whose traditions in pot decoration seem to link them rather with the inhabitants of south Persia or Iraq than with the northerners.

So Baluchistan, a less arid region five thousand years ago than to-day, was being settled by numerous small groups and tribes of people whose ancestors had learnt the arts of agriculture and the technique of organizing small self-sufficing village communities in the Iranian uplands. Dating in years is very difficult for widely scattered illiterate communities in remote antiquity, but it seems unlikely that this colonization of western India was much later than 2800 B.C. and it may well have been a century or two earlier, while the settlements must have flourished for five hundred years and more after their first foundation. The remains of these settlements give at least an outline picture of the economic status and organization of the earliest communities in India which can be claimed as 'civilized', for even if this 'civilization' is little more than the settlement of groups of agriculturalists in small static communities, the existence of such communities is the essential background for the advances in the technique of living marked by Childe's *Urban*

Revolution which we shall meet later in the Indus valley as elsewhere in the ancient East.

The prehistoric Baluchistan villages were small, not usually it seems more than two acres in extent. Defensive village walls or ramparts are virtually unknown, and one can infer therefore a peaceful co-existence of groups of small farmers. Humped cattle were bred and from the very frequent representations of them, on household pots or as clay models, were probably the most important item of the rural economy; grain was also grown and ground to flour, while some hunting of ibex and wild goat may have augmented the larder. The settlements are strung out along the little valleys in the hills, and if certain ancient dams date from this period, some control of irrigation may have been practised. In the buildings of the village there is no evidence of the dominating dwelling of a god or of a headman; a mosaic of small houses built of stone or mud on stone footings covers the whole area, and on one or two sites streets and houses seem arranged on a fairly regular plan. Numerous distinctive regional styles in such tell-tale peasant arts as pottery-painting show clearly that villages or small groups of villages formed self-sufficient economic units with little trade or other contacts outside their own secluded valley (the difficult terrain was itself conducive to the formation of small individual communities, just as in early historic Greece), and all practised much the same rustic industries, including a little metal-working in copper, though there is no direct evidence of the use of wheeled vehicles, which are after all not so essential in a mountainous country-

side. Religion does not seem to have been centralized in any formal temples but household shrines are implied by numerous amusingly realistic clay figurines of cattle or of women; the two strains of culture in north and south Baluchistan mentioned earlier show themselves in the religious aspect, for these Earth Goddess figures (as such they seem to be) show that in the north there was worshipped a grim, hooded and skull-faced embodiment of the ancient mother of the underworld, but in the south we see her as a young Proserpine decked in all the bridal finery of necklaces and bangles, ear ornaments and crimped hair. In these figurines, and particularly in the pottery with its painted designs in black and red and sometimes additional colours, one sees a vigorous art tradition which, if unsophisticated, at least shows its vitality and inventiveness in half-a-dozen 'schools of painting' flourishing in the Baluchistan hills and in southern Sind and producing results which for sureness of execution and admirable balance and design frequently rank equal with those of contemporary Iran and Iraq.

The results of the excavations of the two cities of Mohen-jo-daro and Harappa, presented to the archaeological world in seven ponderous quarto volumes, have, in less intimidating and summarized form, become part of the historical background of most intelligent persons interested in India and the Indian tradition, but often I think only in the rather vague knowledge that prehistoric cities existed on the Indus, somehow connected with ancient Sumerian civilization, and that these cities had quite astonishing drains. But when one comes to amplify this very limited and not

quite accurate impression, the real peculiarities of the Harappa civilization begin to emerge. We find, in the two cities mentioned above and in a great number of subsidiary settlements which range from the upper Sutlej to the Gulf of Cambay, from the Makran to the Rajputana Desert, the remains of a culture preserving a uniformity which indeed becomes an unescapable dull sameness over the whole of this vast territory, to the very extremities of which the same mass-produced and stereotyped products were in use. And not only is this uniformity one of geographical, horizontal, extent, for in the dimension of time, represented vertically in the superimposed ruins of successive settlements up to twenty and thirty feet in thickness, virtually no change is seen in the objects of everyday life, nor in the architecture, nor in the lay-out of the town. To estimate this duration in years is difficult; three hundred years must however be a minimum rather than a maximum estimate.

What was the content and what the origin of this remarkable civilization? As we encounter it, from the evidence of every site and every stratum, we see a material culture already mature and (I should say) already having in it the seeds of decay. It is individually Indian in all details, related to contemporary civilizations of the ancient Orient only in broad fundamentals. Somehow, we know, it must be descended from simple agricultural communities of the type of those in Baluchistan, and its pottery, painted with black designs on a rich red background, suggests connexion rather with the northern group (who used a similar colour scheme) than with the southerners, who

did not. But there is an enormous gulf between the small self-sufficing communities of the Baluchi hills, the villages or at most very small market towns of peasant farmers whose economic surplus over and above provision for themselves and their families must have been extremely small, and the great cities of the Indus and the Punjab with a population living on the produce of farming communities around, whose agriculture was sufficiently advanced and on a large enough scale to provide an adequate yield for sale to a mercantile class after its immediate needs had been satisfied. And self-sufficiency and tribal isolation have been replaced by a uniform civilization over an enormous area, with all its implications of a centralized government and adequate communications (provided by the natural waterways of the great rivers) over the whole region, as well as a common script and system of weights. As yet the intermediate stages between the rudimentary village life of the Baluchi settlements and the already stagnating civic tradition of the Harappa towns elude us, and until further excavation is made the gap is not likely to be filled.

In so far as the Harappa civilization is that of organized town life, with a peasant community contributing to it the products of tilth and herd which the townsman cannot himself supply, it is of course comparable with the early urban civilizations of Iraq, but the differences are more striking than the similarities. As we know it, the Harappa civilization does not seem to be much older than the time of Sargon of Akkad (about 2500 B.C.), by which time many of the great towns of Sumer were already old foundations,

and, if in its early and as yet undiscovered phases it resembled these in detail, by its maturity its traditions had diverged very markedly. The regular planning and lay-out of its towns is unknown elsewhere in the ancient East, where the rabbit-warren tradition of town-building so alive to-day has its roots in remote antiquity (in India such planning was not to be seen again until the building of the British cantonments in the last century), while the justly famous drains of Mohen-jo-daro and Harappa show a concern for sanitation equally unparalleled in the ancient or the modern Orient. Faced with the problem of building permanent houses in a region of periodic torrential rain (when the monsoon extended further west than it does today), the Harappa folk transformed the unbaked clay brick, all too apt to return to its pristine mud, into the baked brick with an almost indefinite life—a technological advance made centuries later elsewhere and only possible in a region which, unlike Sumer, could provide the immense amount of timber necessary for the firing of so many million bricks. But the Indian town planning has an added feature, distinguishing it from the other cities of the ancient East, in the absence of any great temple or palace dominating the lay-out. At Mohen-jo-daro there was certainly a complex of buildings around a huge open bath, all set on an artificial platform twenty feet high, which may well have been associated with ritual ablutions in some form, but at Harappa the only outstanding building was what seems to have been a great communal granary. The houses themselves reflect the same absence of a single dominating personality, earthly or

celestial, in the economy of the towns; variations in size seem to imply variations in income, but little more (though at Harappa is a 'workmens' quarter' of small identically planned cottages mean enough for any contemporary coolie lines), and in effect we see in the towns of the Harappa civilization the distinctive product of a merchant class living on terms of approximate material equality. But although prosperity is implicit in the cities one curious feature is immediately apparent—there is no public art. Not only is there no obvious focus for artists and craftsmen, no temple nor palace, but the private houses of the citizens are lacking in any form of decoration—nothing to relieve the blank cubes of rooms, nothing to mitigate the monotony of the unvarying facades. The artistic output is confined to small private possessions, jewellery, amulets and the like. As one walks to-day through the sun-baked ruins of Mohen-jo-daro, silent save for the salt-crusted earth crushing softly like lightly frozen snow beneath one's feet, there is something very depressing in the long streets of bare brick windowless walls, and however much one may admire the civic determination which laid out and maintained the city, one cannot altogether dispel an uneasy feeling of revulsion from such stark utilitarianism. There is little that endears one to the Harappa civilization, and much that repels. In it we look in vain for the inventive originality that invigorates the less highly organized peasant communities of the Baluchi hills; the Indus valley commercial centres and their outlying trade marts imply all too effectively the elaborate organization of an urban mercantile class whose products lack not only

the barbaric spontaneity of the older and more primitive cultures but even the clearest marks of such vulgarity of Early Dynastic Sumer are seen for instance, in the Royal Tombs of Uruk, and display instead a dead level of bourgeois mediocrity in almost every branch of the visual arts and crafts.

It is easy to over-emphasize the artistic limitations of the Harappa civilization and in doing so to forget that it marks a stage in urban development which in many respects outstripped contemporary cultures of the ancient East. But the art of a people is often a sensitive indicator of their spirit and may give a clue as to their behaviour, and one of the surprising features of the Harappa civilization is its utter collapse and submergence just before or in the face of the barbarian invasions from the north-west which started about 1400 B.C. Unless it was already effete and lifeless, one would expect some evidence of the civic culture of the Indians resisting the invaders - erecting city defences, for instance - or by more politic means compromising and agreeing on a mutual *modus vivendi* with a consequent mixture of cultures in the archaeological record and likely enough a renaissance and invigoration of the old civilization by the infusion of new blood. But we find nothing of the kind. The last inhabitants of the unwallled cities walk along the same street plan and make and use and wear articles identical with those of their forefathers three or five centuries before them, and then is the end. The cities become deserted, with at most a squalid barbarian village occupying the forgotten broken ruins. The decadence and lack of initiative which could bring about such a complete

collapse is however implicit in all Harappa art, the essential artistic stagnation of which is so well seen, to take one instance, in the well-known inscribed stone amulet-seals with intaglio carvings of animals. These normally reach a high standard of technical skill, and the beasts are depicted with at worst a polished fidelity and at best with a vigour beyond this, yet in the vast assemblage of these carvings from all periods of the cities' occupation we can see no development, no innovations, no individuality. The technique is fossilized from the start, and all we see is the standard output of a school of competent but utterly uninspired gem engravers. And, most significantly, the inscriptions too show no sign of change or development in the characters. Even the relatively primitive script has not been improved or modified over the centuries.

What was the cause of this stultification? Partly at least, I think, the answer is to be found, paradoxically enough, in the very qualities which gave the Harappa civilization its initial brilliant success among the urban centres of the ancient East. It was, even more than the civilizations of Sumer, an extremely specialized adaptation of large communities of men to town life in circumstances of climate and terrain which were by no means easy. A delicately balanced structure of civilization was evolved between man and nature; any disturbance of this and nature, expelled by the Harappa pitchfork, might return to claim her own. And the unchanging traditionalism of this system was preserved by isolation—the outside contacts of the Harappa civilization were too slight to allow of new ideas reaching the Indus or the Punjab from the west.

Sea-trade with Sumer had been established by the south Baluchistan folk soon after 3000 B.C. (ritual scenes depicted on pots suggest that worshippers of the humped cow had shrines even in the Diyala valley in Iraq) and the Harappa traders later settled in the villages and small towns on the trade route from the Baluchistan hills to the coast of the Gulf of Oman, taking with them their system of writing and of weights. But although some Harappa objects were reaching Iraq by the time of Sargon (about 2500 B.C.) practically no Sumerian or other foreign influence filtered back, and Indian isolationism was practically complete. After an exceptionally promising start in the main stream of human progress, the Harappa civilization had become a backwater, closed, secret, and Tithonus-like dragging out an aging existence beyond its allotted tale of years.

In north Persia we have in the archaeological record an intimation of what was taking place elsewhere in the years following 2000 B.C. Here, a little town near Damghan, founded probably before 3000 B.C. by people related to those who built the first villages near Loralai, had been receiving and absorbing people and ideas from the barbarian north, from the steppes eastwards of the Caspian Sea, until, by a date which I think to be some time after 2000 B.C., the town was rebuilt, to be peopled exclusively by these folk, whose cemeteries contain the graves of men buried with the equipment of warrior chiefs. Allied people seem to have been living near Merv, again on an anciently founded site; some of them, or at least tools and ornaments made by them, reached India to turn

up, with other evidence of a move of peoples from the west into the Indus valley, not in the last phases of the brick-built towns, but in miserable villages of mud and re-used brickbats built on the flattened ruins, villages inhabited by an illiterate and barbarous population.

Who were these invaders, coming in on the breakdown of civilizations as harbingers of a 'Time of Troubles', in Arnold Toynbee's phrase? About 1500 B.C. the evidence of written documents in Asia Minor shows the intrusion of people speaking a strange language, worshipping new gods, into the Hittite territory; the language is allied to Sanskrit, the gods have the same names as some worshipped by the Aryan Indians. With the archæological evidence of the collapse of civilizations and the incoming of the barbarians from the north and west into India we must somehow associate the authors of the earliest Vedic Hymns. The priests of an illiterate society, and themselves equally without the art of writing, the men who composed and sang these magic incantations had recourse to an elaborate system of memorizing for the preservation not only of their magic, but of their personal prestige, by limiting the oral transmission of the verses to a selected few—a system so successful on both counts that the hymns remained orally transmitted until the end of the eighteenth century A.D. and the Brahmins early established their ascendancy over the other Hindu castes. In the Rig-Veda we see reflected just the barbarism of a primitive 'Heroic Age' that we might expect from the archæological background of the period—petty chieftains ('rajas', Childe has aptly

called them) riding hard, drinking hard, fighting and gaming with a Viking's abandon, and with a pantheon of primitive gods to suit; we are a long way from the urban civilities of Harappa, and well into the Indian Dark Ages.

But the old civilization of the cities, though so thoroughly extinguished materially, survived to contribute strangely to the India of the Middle Ages and today, for Hinduism, the archetype of syncretic religions, seems to owe as much to the cults of the Harappa folk as to the Vedic and later heterogeneous material it so readily adopted and so rapidly augmented with exegesis and comment. If it is not so apparent in the formal teaching of the pandits, in household shrine and village temple there seem to survive more of the domestic rites of the great prehistoric cities than of the ensuing decline. And perhaps the debt is more than a religious one; did the Asokan empire owe nothing to some vague Harappa tradition of organized unity, was the Palipatura described by Megasthenes built without any faint memory or legend of the once-proud cities of the Indus? Were the empires of the Maurya and the Sunga dynasties in any way 'affiliated' (again in Toynbee's sense) to that of Harappa, as Western Christendom was to Hellenic society? Intriguing questions, to which archæology, alone may one day provide the answer.